

APPENDIX D
Cultural Resources Reports

Topanga State Park

Archaeological Test Trenching For Rodeo Grounds Berm Removal Project

October 4, 2005

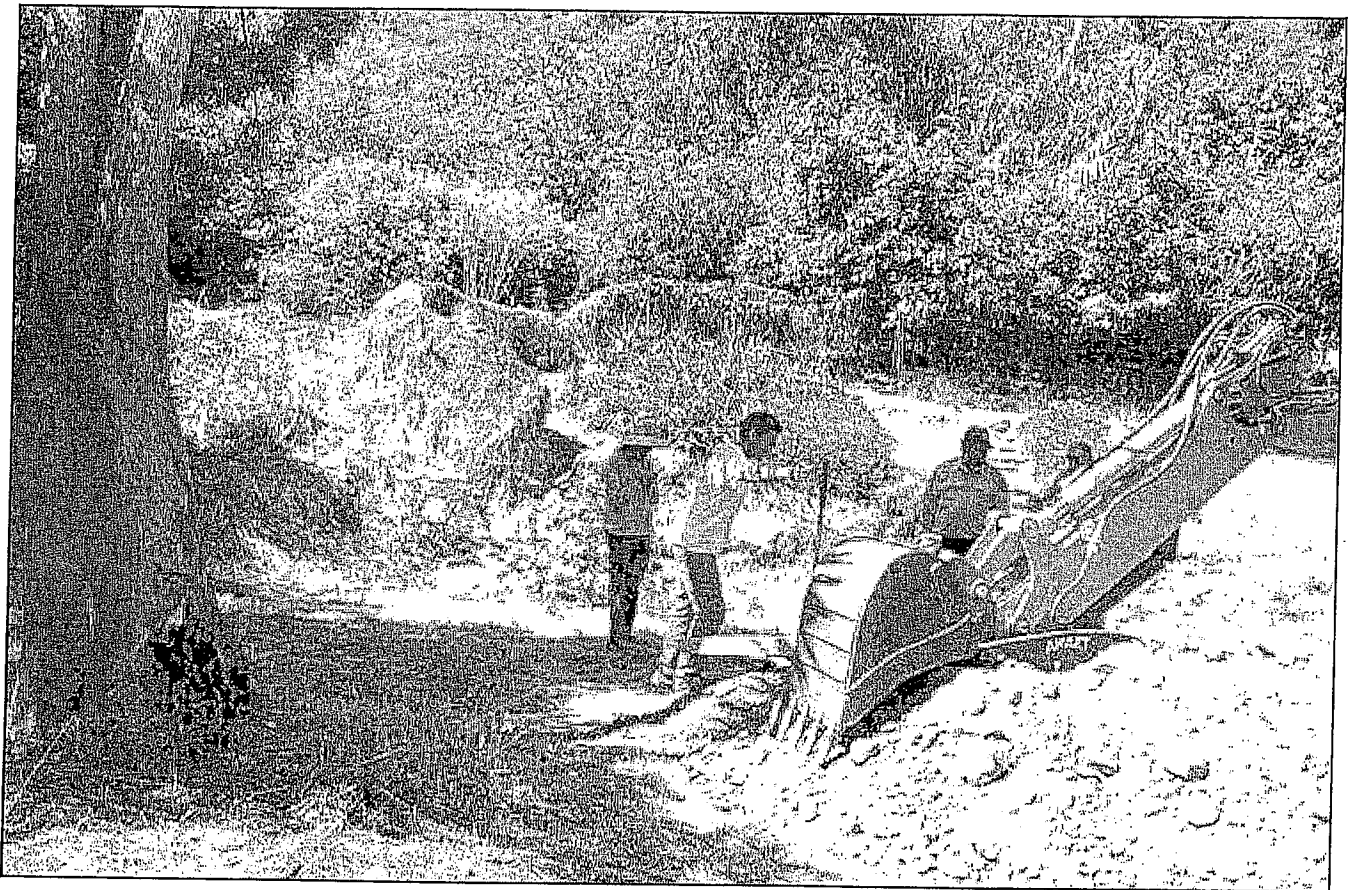


Photo by M. Mealey
Area F Overview

By Marla Mealey
Associate State Archaeologist
Southern Service Center
California State Parks



Topanga State Park Archaeological Test Trenching For Rodeo Grounds Berm Removal Project

INTRODUCTION:

The Rodeo Grounds Berm is located approximately 2,500 feet upstream from the ocean interface of Topanga Creek within Topanga State Park. During preliminary field survey and inventory work at the time that California State Parks acquired the Lower Topanga Canyon property, local informants, park staff, and research conducted using archival maps and aerial photographs indicated that the berm was originally installed sometime during the late 1960s and then reinforced and enlarged in the 1980s. It was created to hold back and divert flood waters from the adjacent Topanga Creek in order to protect homes and property within the area known as the Rodeo Grounds. Because State Parks is removing the residences and because the berm is interfering with the natural flow of the creek, it was proposed that the berm be removed to restore the natural floodplain, creek channel, and sediment transport systems.

No archaeological sites or features are known or recorded within the project area. Sophie Bayler recorded CA-LAN-133 at the mouth of Topanga Canyon in 1905. King (2000:56) noted that one of Harrington's informants mentioned a cemetery with whalebone markers near the mouth of Topanga Canyon close to the beach. This could be the same location as CA-LAN-133; however, local residents reported that a burial ground existed in the area now known as the Rodeo Grounds. One long-time resident said he visited the Rodeo Grounds in the 1960s and remembers whale bones sticking out of the ground. A local Indian told him that it was a Native American burial ground (Shabel & Mealey 2001). The archaeological survey of the Rodeo Grounds did not identify any surface evidence of Native American cultural materials; however, it is possible that cultural deposits are buried under alluvial materials deposited by the adjacent creek, or under fill brought in during construction of the residences in the Rodeo Grounds itself. Additionally, Lower Topanga Canyon has been designated a sacred site by local Native American groups and is on the list of sacred lands maintained by the California Native American Heritage Commission.

Archaeological monitoring of four borehole excavations within the berm itself was carried out in February 2005. No cultural resources were observed during these excavations and it was determined that the berm was constructed out of fill materials (Sampson 2005).

Archaeological testing within the Rodeo Grounds was proposed to determine the presence or absence of buried cultural materials and potential for impacts to cultural resources from the berm removal project. A Native American monitor was contacted to be present during this work, to ensure avoidance of significant impacts to sacred or culturally significant resources.

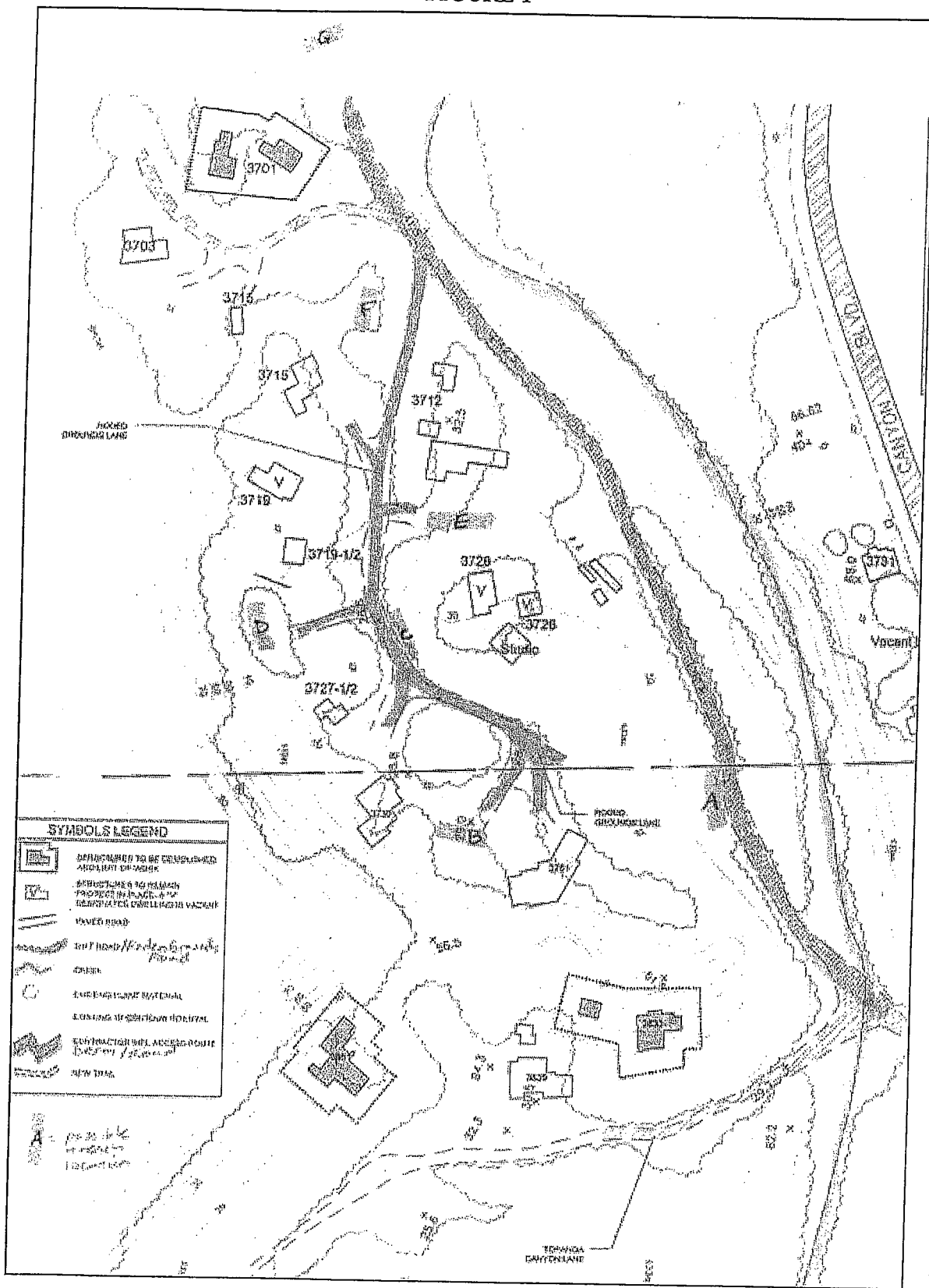
METHODS & RESULTS:

In order to determine presence or absence of buried cultural deposits, seven trench locations were selected throughout the Rodeo Grounds (see Figure 1). Trench locations were selected based on area of possible impacts from berm removal, accessibility for equipment, and avoidance of native trees and underground utility lines. Every effort was also made not to block or restrict access for residents still living in the area.

Testing was carried out on October 3, 2005. Project personnel included Marla Mealey—Associate State Archaeologist, Andy Pillado—State Parks Archaeologist, Greg Dorame—Native American Monitor, Dale Skinner—Park Maintenance Chief, and Brent Johnson—Park Maintenance Worker.

Work started at Area F (see Figure 1) then moved to Areas E and D. Area C was excavated to approximately 50 cm when a water line was uncovered and that location was abandoned. It was determined that Area A was inaccessible for the equipment, so an alternative location was selected and given the designation of Area H. Finally, Area B was excavated. Area G was abandoned because it was determined that it was within the berm.

FIGURE 1



Trenches were excavated by backhoe. Trenching was monitored by archaeologists and the Native American representative. Samples of the excavated soils were screened through 1/8-inch hardware cloth. Trenches were backfilled after the examination of each area was complete. The results for each trench area are presented below in the order that they were excavated:

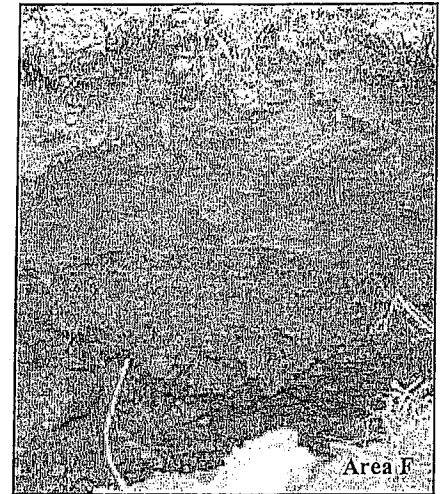
AREA F

0-70cm Sandy Loam & building debris
70-125cm Sandy / Shaley
125cm+ Stream cobbles & sand

The trench was dug to a depth of approximately 1.5 meters and approximately 4.5 meters in length.

Approximately .25 cubic meters of soil were screened through 1/8-inch hardware cloth.

Recovered materials include a couple pieces of modern glass and construction debris (plaster, wood, & brick).



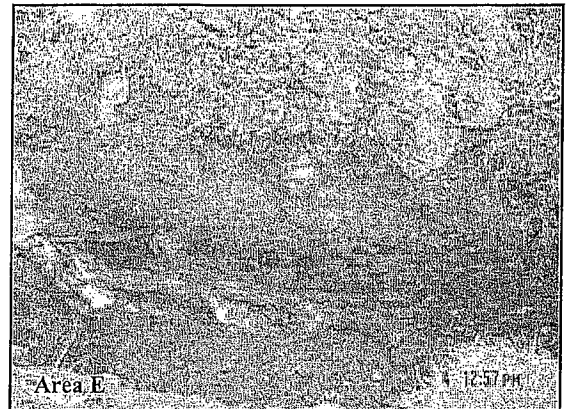
AREA E

0-80cm Loamy soil, darker than in Area F trench with more moisture. Some chunks of clay observed. Not as much building debris observed here.
80-135cm Sandy soil with some smaller cobbles
135cm+ Stream cobbles & sand

Trench was dug to a depth of approximately 1.5 meters and approximately 3.5 meters in length.

Approximately .20 cubic meters of soil were screened through 1/8-inch hardware cloth.

Recovered materials include modern or recent historic glass and one small piece of porcelain. Glass is mostly bottle glass with a few pieces of window glass and a couple pieces of mirror.



AREA D

0-60cm Disturbed Loamy soil & building debris.
60-120cm Sandy loam tan soil
120-150cm Sandy with smaller cobbles
150cm+ Stream Cobbles & sand

Trench was dug to a depth of approximately 1.6 meters and approximately 3.5 meters in length

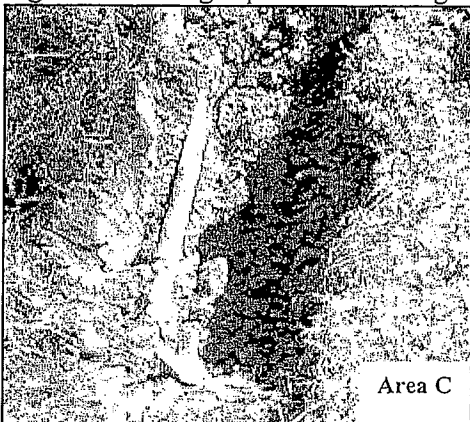
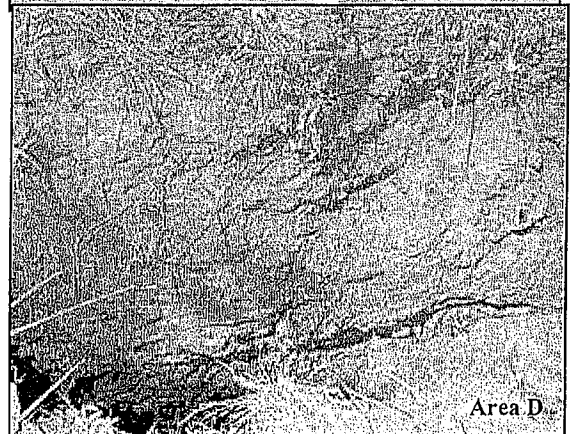
Approximately .25 cubic meters of soil were screened through 1/8-inch hardware cloth.

Recovered materials include modern construction debris and glass including 2 pieces of bottle glass, 1 piece of window glass,

4 pieces of thick mirror glass, and 1 piece of melted glass.

Additionally 2 pieces of

black and tan glazed pottery were also recovered. Part of a brick foundation was encountered in the southern end of the trench.



AREA C

0-50cm Disturbed fill

This trench was only dug to a depth of approximately 50 cm when a waterline was uncovered. Trench was abandoned.

AREA A

Inaccessible for equipment. Trench was abandoned and new area (Area H) was selected.

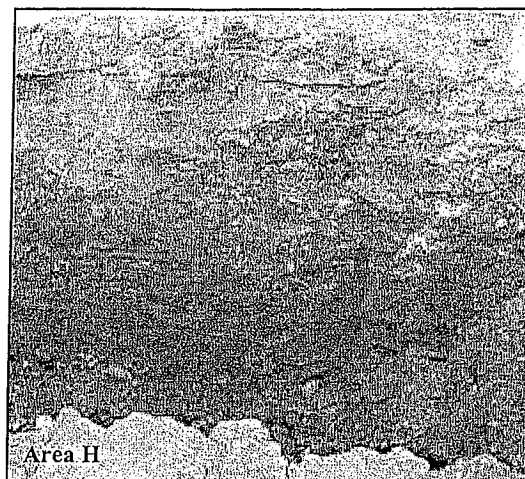
AREA H (new area—see Figure 2)

0-40cm	Disturbed roadbed & fill
40-80cm	Moist clayey loam
80-110cm	Sandy with smaller cobbles
110cm+	Stream cobbles & sand

Trench was dug to a depth of approximately 1.2 meters and approximately 3 meters in length.

Approximately .2 cubic meters of soil were screened through 1/8-inch hardware cloth. Soils were moist with more clay than other trenches and did not go through the screen as well.

No cultural materials were recovered at this location.



AREA B

0-70cm	Clayey loam (less clayey than at Area H)
70-130cm	Sandy with small cobbles
130cm+	Stream Cobbles & sand (hit water table at 130cm)

Trench was dug to a depth of approximately 1.35 meters and approximately 3.5 meters in length.

Approximately .25 cubic meters of soil were screened through 1/8-inch hardware cloth. Soils were moist to wet (especially near the bottom of the trench) making screening somewhat difficult.

Recovered materials include 3 pieces of window glass, more than 10 pieces of mirrored glass (mostly thin, one piece thicker), and construction debris (plaster and wood fragments).

AREA G

Abandoned due to location within the berm and proximity to borehole test location (already tested).

Additional Photos

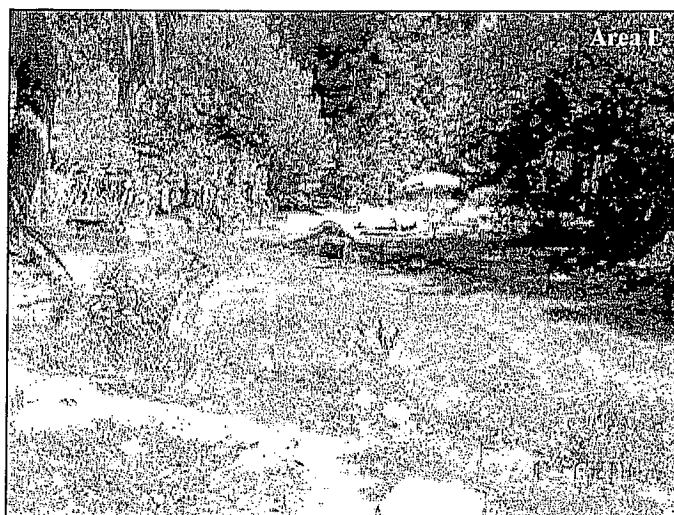
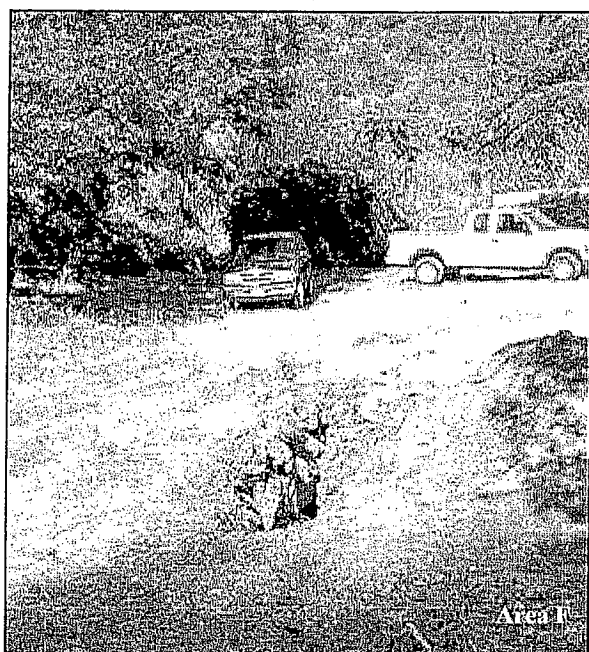
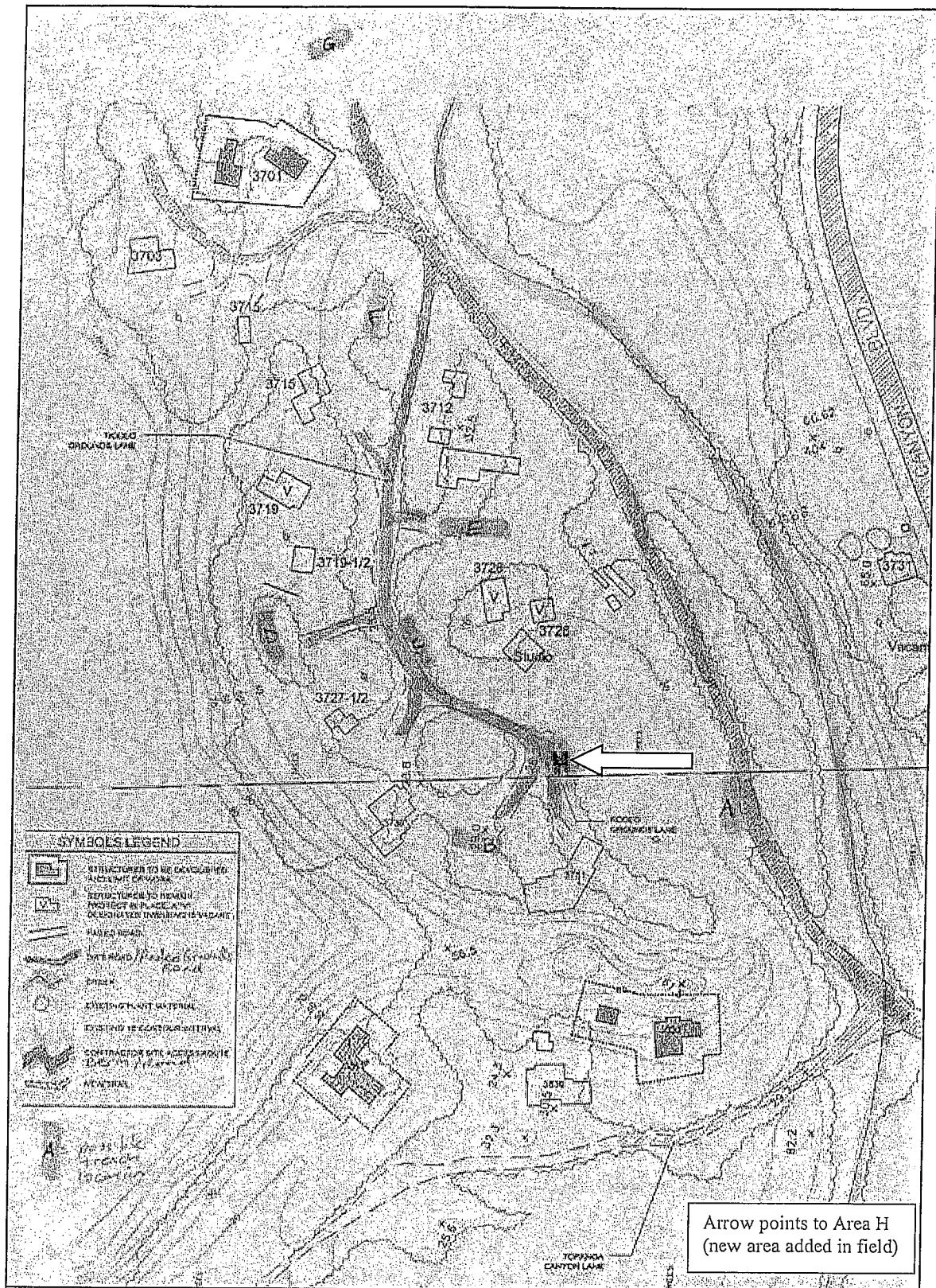
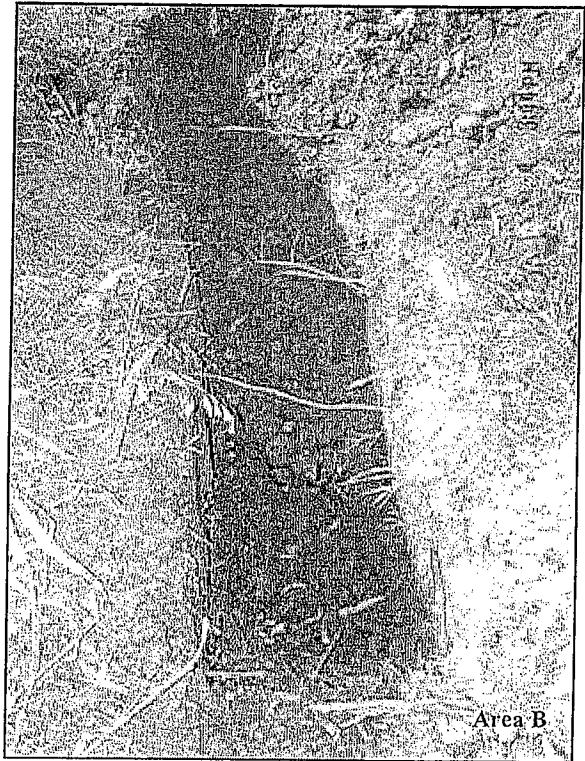
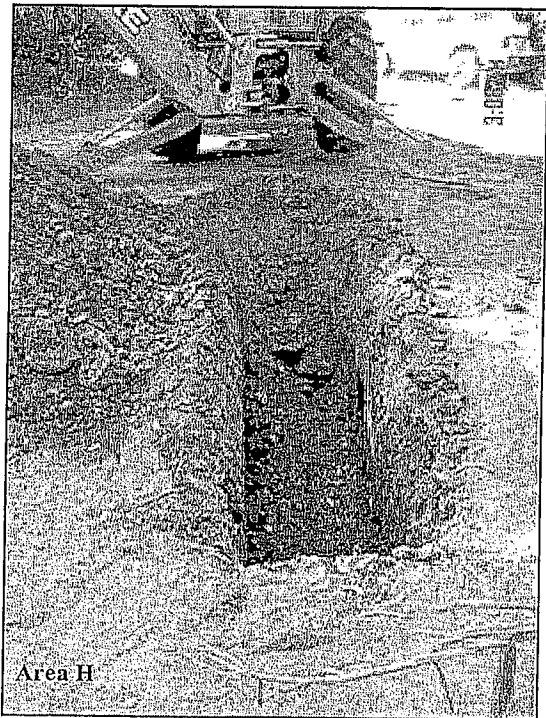
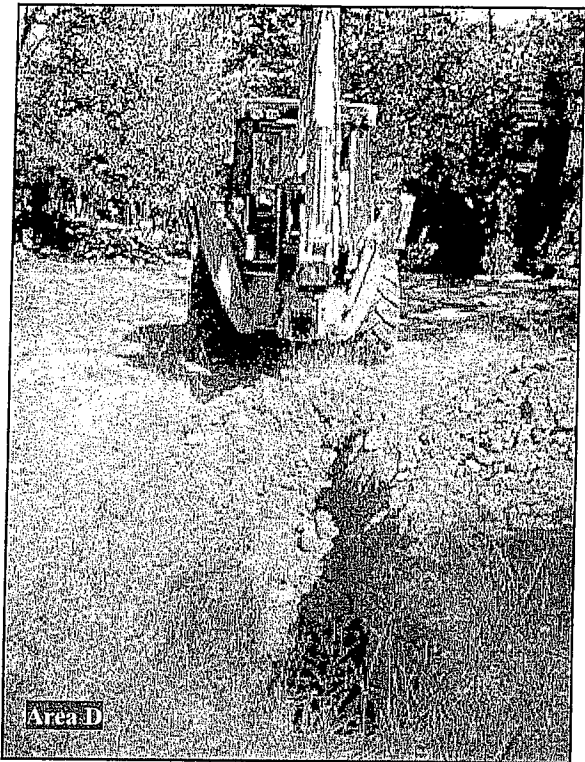


FIGURE 2



Additional Photos (continued)



RECOMMENDATIONS:

Based on the results of this archaeological testing work, it appears that the areas of the Rodeo Grounds that may be impacted by the berm removal project are entirely within the historic creek bed and that there is no potential for cultural resources to be damaged or destroyed by such work. The potential still exists for cultural resources to be located on terraces along the edges of the drainage or on the small natural ridgeline that extends out into the drainage from the west (see Figures 1 & 2). Any future subsurface work that occurs in those areas should be tested and/or monitored by an archaeologist and Native American representative.

REFERENCES

Bayler, Sophie

- 1905 Site form for CA-LAN-133. On file at the South Central Coastal Information Center, California State University, Fullerton.

King, Chester

- 2000 *Native American Indian Cultural Sites in the Santa Monica Mountains*. Report prepared for the Santa Monica Mountains and Seashore Foundation.

Sampson, Michael

- 2005 Archaeological Monitoring of Four Borings within a 20th Century Berm at Lower Topanga Canyon. On File at California State Parks, Southern Service Center, San Diego

Shabel, Karen and Marla Mealey

- 2001 *Lower Topanga Canyon Acquisition Interim Management Plan, Cultural Resources Survey: Archaeology*. On file at California State Parks, Southern Service Center, San Diego.

Topanga State Park: Lower Topanga Canyon Acquisition
Interim Management Plan
Cultural Resources Survey
Historical Resources Evaluation Report

INTRODUCTION

This report is as an overview of the historical development of the area known as the Lower Topanga Canyon Acquisition to Topanga State Park. It is also meant to identify and assess the eligibility of potentially historic resources within the study area. Located in Los Angeles County, the approximately 1,659-acre tract is confined to the southern portion of the Santa Monica Mountains between the communities of Malibu and Pacific Palisades along Santa Monica Bay. Topanga State Park, in the City of Los Angeles, runs along its northern and most of its eastern boundaries. A section of the neighboring Parker Mesa residential tract, also in the City of Los Angeles, runs diagonally in a northerly to southerly direction along the study area's southeastern boundary toward Pacific Coast Highway. The latter, which runs in a westerly direction toward the acquisition's southwestern corner, also defines its southern boundary, separating it from the adjacent Topanga Beach. The acquisition's western boundary travels diagonally in a northwesterly direction from the historic starting point of the former *Rancho Boca de Santa Monica*, along a portion of the boundary with the City of Malibu. The remainder rises into rolling hills and steep arroyos along unincorporated land. Except for the neighboring Parker Mesa residential neighborhood, the land surrounding the subject property is sparsely developed mainly with large single-family homes. Bisected by the Topanga Creek and Topanga Canyon Boulevard, the roughly trapezoidal acquisition property extends about two miles in a northerly to southerly direction. The latter is a heavily traveled north/south highway corridor connecting the Malibu/Pacific Palisades coastline over the Santa Monica Mountains to western San Fernando Valley. The previously mentioned Pacific Coast Highway [PCH] is another heavily traveled traffic corridor that is the principal coastal route connecting Ventura County with the City of Santa Monica and the western section of the City of Los Angeles.¹

Because its previous owner had speculatively held the acquisition property pending future development, the subject property is in a relatively undeveloped state when compared to its neighbors. Improvements are limited primarily to the southwestern portion, along PCH and approximately a mile north along Topanga Canyon Boulevard. The greatest concentration of structures is in the southwesterly portion, west of the intersection of Topanga Canyon Boulevard, along PCH, to the southwestern corner. Generally oriented toward the beach, the area consists of highway-oriented roadside commercial properties, including restaurants, a motel, and a market, with residential homes extending northward along the Topanga Creek drainage. A smaller grouping of widely spaced residential homes can also be found a mile or so north of the intersection near a sharp bend in Topanga Canyon Boulevard. The majority of these homes lie directly off the highway, while a small number are accessible by dirt road a short distance down along the creek bed. The remainder of the property, especially to the north and northeast, is undeveloped due to extremely steep brush-covered

¹ Mason and Mason, *Appraisal Report of the LAACO Ownership* (19 February 2001), 12-14; and Robert G. Cowan, *Ranchos of California* (Los Angeles: The Historical Society of Southern California), 1977.

mountainous terrain. In hindsight, the area's inaccessibility has led to the preservation of a unique open space for public recreational use.²

METHODOLOGY

The report presents the results of field survey work and research conducted between September and January of 2001-2002 to assess historic resources in the Lower Topanga Canyon Acquisition area of Topanga State Park. Primary and secondary sources used to prepare this report came from the records and archives of the following organizations: the California Department of Parks and Recreation, Southern Service Center, San Diego; California Department of Transportation, Sector 7 Offices, Los Angeles, and Departmental Library, Sacramento. Also consulted were the public libraries of the cities of San Diego, Los Angeles, and Santa Monica; the historical societies of Topanga and Pacific Palisades; the Automobile Club of Southern California Archives, Los Angeles; and the offices and files of the *Malibu Times* and the *Topanga Messenger*. In addition the research libraries and photograph collections at UCLA, California State University, Northridge, and San Diego State University were also consulted. Personal and telephone interviews were held with several current and former residents of the study area.

During the field survey, research, and evaluation phases, the *U.S. National Park Services' National Register Criteria for Evaluation* were used to determine the potential eligibility of the extant buildings, structures, objects, districts and cultural landscape features for the National Register of Historic Places. In summary, the Criteria require that the properties be evaluated based on their age, historical significance, and their historical integrity.³ These are the accepted criteria for establishing historical significance for both the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and California Public Resources Code 5024.

SUMMARY

The subject property has been witness to various overlapping periods of Southern California's history, from Spanish Colonial to modern times. The first period is associated with the expansion of automobile-oriented tourism and recreational opportunities along Santa Monica Bay and up into the coastal mountains between 1915 and 1933. It also represents the most significant period of the area's history in which the property's then owner, the *Los Angeles Athletic Club*, attempted to develop the southwestern section into an upscale yacht harbor and rustic mountain retreat. Although the project never materialized as LAAC intended, the area developed on its own into a vibrant beach-oriented vacation community. Concentrated in an area between the beach and the Topanga Creek lagoon, the area, known as *Topanga Beach Tent City*, contained as many as 125 tents, small cabins, bungalows, and cottages, as well as a number of small highway-oriented businesses. The second phase occurred between 1933 and 1940, when highway improvements led to intensive environmental change, primarily between Topanga Beach and the lagoon area. The most significant event to occur during this time was a disastrous brushfire and subsequent flooding that reportedly destroyed upward to 118 homes and structures at the canyon's mouth. The third phase began immediately after World War II, between 1945 and 1965, when the lower residential and commercial area experienced ongoing change and development. The fourth phase, from 1965 to 1980, saw the loss of more cabin homes through flood, fire, and the State's acquisition and conversion of the beachfront into a state beach. The final phase, from 1980 to the present, witnessed the infusion of newer more conventional and permanent homes. By this, through fire, flood and neglect, the area's built environment no longer reflected its earlier significant period of historic development.

² Mason and Mason, *Appraisal Report*, 13.

³ United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *National Register Bulletin No. 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* (Washington, D.C.: Author, 1999), 2, 41 and 44.

Overall, the Lower Topanga Canyon acquisition property's surviving cultural landscape is a piecemeal agglomeration of unrelated parts. Some individual buildings are representative examples of the area's various phases of historic growth and development and meet the necessary criteria for National Register eligibility. However, the remaining have lost their historic integrity either through inappropriate remodeling, alterations and/or repairs and fail to convey their association with any historical significance and therefore are not eligible as historic resources.,.

HISTORIC BACKGROUND

Periods of Spanish Exploration and Mexican Ranchos

Although native peoples had occupied the lower canyon and coastal area thousands of years prior, the land now known as the Lower Topanga Canyon Acquisition's historical record technically begins in 1542. Among the first Europeans to have seen the area was Captain Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo [pronounced Cabrilho in his native Portuguese] and his crew who were sailing north along the coast to explore the northern limits of Spanish Alta California's coastline. On October 8, 1542 he sailed north from the port of San Miguel [today's San Diego] into a bay he named "La Bahia de Los Fumos" or "The Bay of the Smokes," so named because of the many native campfires he saw along its shore. Historian Herbert E. Bolton believed that Cabrillo was describing Santa Monica Bay, and that he anchored his ship some six miles due west of the Topanga Creek outfall the following day. Referring to the anchorage as *La Ensenada Grande* (The Large Cove or Inlet) he ordered his crew to fill the ships' water casks in the nearby Malibu Creek. The following day, he set sail and continued his reconnoiter of the California coastline.⁴

Although Cabrillo had claimed the land for the Spanish crown, there was no effort to occupy California until 1769. That year Spain again focused its attention on settling its Alta California territory, where it would establish a number of military forts or *presidios*, religious missions, and civilian settlements or *pueblos*. Scouting parties from Governor Gaspar de Portolá's expedition from San Diego to find and occupy Monterey Bay reportedly viewed the Lower Topanga Canyon Acquisition's beach and mountains from what is now Santa Monica. Determining that the beach route was untenable, they recommended that Portolá use another route. Traveling northward through the Cahuenga and Sepúlveda passes, they trekked inland through what is now the San Fernando Valley. Along the trail blazed by Portolá, later known as *El Camino Real*, Portolá and his group stopped at two Native American villages along the lee side of the Santa Monica Mountain range near present day Encino. The local villagers, who anthropologists would later refer to as the *Tongva*, told Portolá of sighting sailing ships along the coast (possibly Spanish Manila galleons on their way south to Acapulco). Scattered throughout the Greater Los Angeles basin, the Tongva's legacy remains in such place names as, Cucamonga, Cahuenga, and Topanga. The latter's original location is unknown, however linguists have interpreted the name to mean a special place that was "high," "above" or in the "sky." The Spanish missionaries at San Fernando recorded the name "Topanga" in their records, but failed to indicate its specific location.⁵

The name "Topanga" appears on a map in 1838 when Francisco Marquez and Ysidro Reyes sent a petition for their acquisition of the *Rancho Boca de Santa Monica* (literally: the Ranch at the Mouth of

⁴ Fred E. Basten, *Santa Monica Bay: the First 100 Years* (Los Angeles: Douglas-West Publishers, 1974), 2 and 54 and Betty Lou Young and Thomas R. Young *Pacific Palisades: Where the Mountains Meet the Sea* (Pacific Palisades: Pacific Palisades Historical Society Press, 1983), 9-10.

⁵ Young and Young, *Pacific Palisades*, 9; Kevin Roderick, *The San Fernando Valley: America's Suburb* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles Times Books, 2001), 19-20; Louise Armstrong York, ed., *The Topanga Story* (Topanga: Topanga Historical Society, 1992), 1; and Leonard and Dale Pitt, *Los Angeles: A to Z: An Encyclopedia of the City and County* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 504.

Santa Monica in Spanish). The 6658-acre ranch was originally granted to Antonio Ignacio Machado and Francisco Javier Alvarado in 1827. However, both men and their descendents relinquished all rights to Rancho Boca de Santa Monica to Marquez and Reyes.⁶

On August 13, 1839, Alcalde Antonio Machado, along with Marquez and Reyes, surveyors and other officials met at the southwestern most corner of Rancho Boca de Santa Monica. Historian Ernest Marquez indicated that they met at a point designated on the diseño as "*Topanga Point*." He describes its location as "a bluff, close to the sea just west of the entrance to Topanga Canyon. This would place it west of and slightly south of the intersection of Old Malibu Road and PCH. From this point, one of the two "cordsmen" or surveyors drove a pole into the ground. His partner then rode his horse southeasterly across "*Cañada Topanga*" (A *cañada* is a Spanish term for a gully or ravine) overgrown with thule" along the mouth of Topanga Creek. Behind him trailed a length of buckskin *la riata* (lariat) or rope measuring a *vara* (277.5 feet) from pole to pole. When the first rider reached the end of his lariat, he pulled it taught and drove his pole into the ground. He then remained stationary while his partner rode pass him until he came to the end of his line. They repeated the process along the shore until they reached a gully in the cliffs some 7,500 varas to the southeast (Montana Avenue in the City of Santa Monica). Traveling north some 4,000 varas (to a point near today's Mandeville Canyon and Sunset Boulevard), the team was unable to measure the rancho's northerly boundary due to steep mountainous terrain. They merely extended an imaginary line over the ridges to a point past Topanga Canyon. Satisfied, the alcalde ordered the survey completed at this point, with the westernmost boundary line running, *mas o menos* (more or less) diagonally from the present community of Fernwood to the point of origin.⁷

Other than Topanga Point, there are no other references to the Lower Topanga Canyon Acquisition area during either the Spanish Colonial or Mexican Rancho periods. Marquez and Reyes, who built permanent adobe homes closer to today's Santa Monica, hunted wild game, including bear, in the canyons and mountains. They also used Native American or Mestizo vaqueros and laborers to run and process large herds of cattle and sheep. In the spring, these "cowboys" would hold a series of *rodeos* or round ups where they gathered and segregated livestock and branded newborn calves. During the fall, they held *matanzas*, where they slaughtered cattle and skinned them for their hides. Used as an important cash crop, the cured hides could be traded to ship captains at San Pedro or other landing places along the shore for manufactured goods from waiting ships. Important parts of the rancho lifestyle, both the *matanza* and *rodeo* were also festive social events featuring exhibitions of horsemanship, races, huge barbecues, and dancing.⁸ Rancho Boca de Santa Monica was associated with one of the lengthiest land disputes in 19th century Los Angeles. In December 1839, Francisco Sepúlveda claimed that it was taken from his original 1828 grant for *Rancho San Vicente*, and that his renewed claim, *Rancho San Vicente y Santa Monica*, should include portions of Marquez and Reyes' claim. Disputes regarding who owned what continued for over forty years, with the Los Angeles District Court finally settling the issue in 1892.⁹

Anglo-American Acquisition

⁶ Cowan, *Ranchos of California*, 89 and 95; Young and Young, *Pacific Palisades*, 10-11; and Ernest Marquez, *Rancho Boca de Santa Monica*, In *Brand Book Twenty: Rancho Days in Southern California: An Anthology with New Perspectives*. Kenneth Pauley, ed. (Studio City: Westerners, Los Angeles Corral, 1997), 89.

⁷ Marquez, *Rancho Boca de Santa Monica*, 89-90; and Young and Young, *Pacific Palisades*, 11-12.

⁸ Marquez, *Rancho Boca de Santa Monica*, 90-91; and Young and Young, *Pacific Palisades*, 12-13.

⁹ Marquez, *Rancho Boca de Santa Monica*, 91; Young and Young, *Pacific Palisades*, 14; and General Telephone Company of California, *Malibu Telephone Directory* (April 1968), 75.

As a result of the Mexican War of 1846-1848, and the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo on February 2, 1848, Alta California became a territory of the United States. While the treaty guaranteed prior ownership of the land to pre-war inhabitants, they faced tremendous pressure to hold these claims. The aftermath of the Northern California Gold Rush also brought thousands of land-hungry immigrants into Southern California who argued that the former rancho lands should become public property by rights of conquest. Many land rich but money poor rancheros lost their land as payment to unscrupulous lawyers or judges who dragged their cases for years. The Marquez and Reyes families were no different. However, they were eventually able to support their claim. Nonetheless, by 1872, mining equipment supplier and cattleman Colonel Robert S. Baker bought up approximately 2,000 acres of the rancho from Ysidro's descendant María Antonia Villa de Reyes. Baker had also purchased the neighboring San Vicente y Santa Monica and part of *Rancho la Ballona* to the south. Like many Anglo-American entrepreneurs, he hoped to found a town, establish a railhead and wharf, and eventually become a millionaire for his efforts. In 1874 he and his partner, Senator John P. Jones of Nevada, proposed to extend a railroad from the latter's Inyo County silver mines to the new town of Santa Monica.¹⁰

Because Baker held an undivided claim to Rancho Boca de Santa Monica, he had no idea where his property ended and that of Francisco Marquez' heirs began. As a result, he filed a complaint in the Los Angeles District Court in 1874 requesting the Court partition the rancho between himself and Marquez' heirs. A United States Surveyor had to settle the boundary issue. The surveyor repositioned the boundary between the rancho and neighboring San Vicente y Santa Monica ranch in Baker, reducing the heir's claim to a line below the original 1839 Juridicial Possession line. On July 6, 1882, the Los Angeles County Superior Court upheld Baker's claim.¹¹

As part of the settlement, three impartial referees had subdivided the remainder of the rancho to each heir. One of these, Bonifacio Marquez, received 1,857.2 acres of land constituting the rancho's western most section. Except for a 198-acre parcel in the section's southeastern quarter (Parker Mesa), Bonifacio Marquez' "Allotment No. 2" constitutes the entire Lower Topanga Canyon Acquisition property. Eight years after his death, in January 1899 his widow sold the property at auction for \$7,392.04 to E. C. Stelle.¹²

Homesteading and Hunting

All indications suggest that the Lower Topanga Canyon Acquisition remained relatively undeveloped until the first quarter of the 20th century. That does not diminish its geographic significance. The acquisition's southwestern and western sections were important early transportation corridors. From prehistoric times to the Mexican Rancho period, *Arroyo Topanga* or Topanga Canyon was a natural corridor linking Santa Monica Bay to the western San Fernando Valley. Likewise, the low bluffs and sandy beach along its shore served as a connective route between the nearby *Rancho Topanga Malibu Sostomo Simi Sequit* to the west and neighboring ranchos and the Los Angeles pueblo to the east. As time progressed, these routes became important wagon roads to growing numbers of people homesteading in and around the present community of Topanga. Due to travel restrictions through the neighboring Rindge Ranch (the former Malibu rancho), Topanga Canyon served as an alternate route for cattlemen driving their herds from Ventura County to the railheads and wharves between Santa Monica and San Pedro. Also attracted to the area were hunters seeking game in the Santa Monica

¹⁰ Marquez, *Rancho Boca de Santa Monica*, 93-99.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 99.

¹² *Ibid.*, 100-101; and Mason and Mason, *Appraisal Report*, 14.

Mountains. Invariably, the coastal beach, especially the marshy tules along Cañada Topanga also attracted bird hunters as well as fishermen.¹³

Automobile-oriented Tourist's Weekend Retreat

By 1898, a somewhat improved Topanga Canyon Road extended from the western San Fernando Valley over the mountains to what was then known as the "Malibu Ranch Road." Improved access to the beach and mountains facilitated an influx of travelers and visitors attracted to the beach and rustic mountain scenery. Between 1900 and 1920 a number of tourist-oriented camps as well as homesteads sprung up in the Topanga Canyon and surrounding mountain area. One of these, *Camp Elkhorn*, was situated in the Lower Topanga Canyon area. One of the oldest tourist camps in the area, it was located approximately 1 ½ miles north of the intersection of Topanga Canyon Boulevard and PCH. A 1920s-era travel brochure described it as "a pleasant spot for the week-end stopover." The camp featured "a store and café in connection with the cabins . . . as well as a good dancing pavilion." Like many of the cabin and homestead sites located within the Topanga Creek drainage, Camp Elkhorn was literally wiped off the earth in 1916 as torrential rain-swollen floods scoured the canyon clean from a point known as "The Narrows" all the way to the beach. Undaunted, the camp's operators rebuilt and Camp Elkhorn continued to serve as a staging and jumping off point for hiking and hunting expeditions into the mountains. The camp remained in operation until 1938, when floodwaters again roared through the canyon.¹⁴

The growth of the Lower Topanga Canyon area as part of a major early 20th century tourist destination represents an overall expansion of tourism as a major growth industry in the Greater Los Angeles area during this time. As early as the 1870s, local boosters advertised the area's year-round sunshine and spectacular natural surroundings to a growing number of visitors arriving on the transcontinental railroad. By the 1890s, affluent travelers flocked to the area as part of their whirlwind tours of the American West. A number of upscale resort hotels, such as the *Arcadia* in nearby Santa Monica, soon sprang up along local steam and electric rail lines. As the automobile engine became more reliable, a growing number of motorized "stage" or bus lines provided service between urban rail stations and outlying areas.

Such was the case with the Lower Topanga Canyon area. In 1909 an automobile stage line began regular service between Santa Monica and the mountain camps along Topanga Creek. An improved 3-lane concrete-paved highway, reportedly costing \$8,400 a mile, was completed through Topanga Canyon in 1915. Terminating at Ventura Boulevard at the town of Girard (now Chatsworth), it became the principal north/south highway between Los Angeles and western Ventura County. The improved road facilitated automobile travel through one of the few accessible mountain passes connecting the western San Fernando Valley to the coast. Impressed with the road's scenic beauty, on May 29, 1915 the *Los Angeles Times* conducted a "Scenic Automobile Tour" to celebrate its official opening. The road's builders and local real estate boosters wasted no effort in garnering hyperbolic platitudes upon the new road. Highway engineers touted it as "one of the most remarkable feats of road engineering in existence." A prominent member of the Automobile Club of Southern California effused, "The route is a wonder! It is in a class by itself as far as the engineering is concerned and as for beauty, there is no need of trying to describe that."¹⁵

¹³ Cowan, *Ranchos of California*, 104; York, *The Topanga Story*, 32 and 42; Young and Young, *Pacific Palisades*, 39; United States Geological Survey, *Topanga*, 1877.

¹⁴ York, *The Topanga Story*, 39 and 47; United States Geological Survey, *Topanga*, 1928 and 1932; and Francis Brunner, *Southern California's Prettiest Drive* (Los Angeles: Author, 1925, reprinted 2000, Topanga Historical Society), 8.

¹⁵ Leonard and Dale Pitt, *Los Angeles: A to Z*, 373 and 505; *Los Angeles Sunday Times*, 16 May 1915, Part VII, 1; and *Western Construction News* (10 May 1930), 233.

Southern California's Prettiest Drive: "A Sure Cure for the Blues"

Santa Monica businessman Francis Brunner promoted Topanga Canyon Boulevard, as well as the connecting Coast Road as "Southern California's Prettiest Drive." Brunner, who had taken over the earlier automobile stage service in 1922, regarded the canyon as "the loveliest in all California." Describing the road in 1925, he said that it led "one quickly from the coast to higher altitudes." Two interesting roadside attractions located along the road in the Lower Topanga Canyon Acquisition area described by Brunner are "a deep, rock-walled canyon" (the Narrows) and nearby "Sentinel Rock—the guardian of Topanga, on duty at the canyon's narrowest point." While not yet identified on any map during the research phase of this report, it appears that Sentinel Rock may be the huge 350-foot-high rock outcropping overlooking Topanga Canyon Road approximately one mile north of PCH.¹⁶

Brunner drove a Dodge and later a Packard passenger sightseeing car over the mountain and beach routes. Brunner promised that a ride on the *Topanga and Las Flores Canyon Stages*, to the Topanga summit "will improve a poor appetite, get rid of colds, relax nerves, and provide a sure cure for the 'blues'." Stops along the way were not limited to the mountains. The Las Flores Canyon route stopped at Topanga Beach, a broad stretch of beach about a half mile long between Topanga Point and the "Natural Arch" (outside the present acquisition area). Here, according to the stage line's timetable and fare schedule, "swimming is the leading diversion, though dancing claims its share of the popularity." In addition, "Cabin accommodations are to be had at Topanga Beach Tent City."¹⁷

The completion of a graded dirt road through the Malibu Ranch in 1921, and the opening of Beverly (changed to Sunset in 1933) and Wilshire boulevards during the mid-1920s had a profound effect on the Lower Topanga Canyon Acquisition area. Automobile and truck traffic could now travel between downtown Los Angeles and the rich agricultural fields of the Ventura River delta, bypassing the long grades encountered on Highway 101 between Camarillo and the Sepúlveda and Cahuenga passes into Los Angeles. It also opened the coastal area to hundreds of auto-tourists seeking to enjoy the area's once inaccessible beaches and mountains. As traffic increased, motorists, farmers, and trucking firms lobbied the State and County to improve the route. As a result, in 1927 the State of California began construction of an improved 20-mile right-of-way through the Malibu Ranch. The ranch's owner May K. Rindge, had fought the project in the courts for years, blocking access during much of the early 1920s, but the U. S. Supreme Court had handed down its landmark decision a year earlier supporting the State's acquisition of the road under the law of eminent domain.

Prior to the Coast Road's construction, the State Highway Commission had recommended that sand from Topanga Beach be used to make concrete road pavement. However, there is no evidence of this ever having been done. The Commission is on record as stating that there wasn't enough sand for the job at this location. Therefore, it recommended that the supplier, the *Union Rock Company*, would have to ship sand in by rail and truck from its Los Angeles plants. Completed in June 1929, the scenic "Roosevelt Memorial Highway" (also known as State Alternate Highway 101A and Pacific Coast Highway) connected Santa Monica to the rich agricultural Ventura Valley river delta.¹⁸

¹⁶ York, *The Topanga Story*, 61; Brunner, *Southern California's Prettiest Drive*, 3 and 7; and USGS Topographic Map, *Topanga*, 1928, 1932, 1951, 1981.

¹⁷ York, *The Topanga Story*, 61 and 146; and Brunner, *Southern California's Prettiest Drive*, 8 and 19.

¹⁸ Young and Young, *Pacific Palisades*, 97, 113 and 152; Doris Gilliland, *The History of Rancho Malibu* [Masters Thesis] (University of Southern California, June 1947), 82; David F. Myrick, "The Determined Mrs. Rindge and Her Legendary Railroad: A History of the Hueneme, Malibu and Port Los Angeles Railway," in *The Ventura County Historical Society Quarterly*, vol. 41, no. 3, 1996: 35; Jo Hindman, "The Big Ranch Fight," in *The Historical Society of Southern California* (137, March 1955): 67; and California Highway Commission, *Preliminary Report on a Proposed State Highway VII-LA-60-B in Los Angeles County, Malibu Ranch to Santa Monica, 7.385 Miles*, (Sacramento: California Department of Engineering, 16 September 1921): 4, 22; and Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration, *California: A Guide to the Golden State* (New York: Hastings House, 1939), 415.

The new coast highway elevated the Lower Topanga area from an end-of-the line destination to part of a major West Coast arterial highway running from the Mexican to the Canadian border. The natural and scenic wonders along the route between Santa Monica and the Malibu shoreline attracted hundreds of automobile owners who conducted day trips or weekend jaunts during the 1920s. In response, a number of entrepreneurs established places along the road where motorists could stop, perhaps have a picnic or eat at a roadside café, or stay and camp overnight. Although they relied on modern technology, these automobile-oriented recreationalists regarded autocamping as a simple, more leisurely paced opportunity to enjoy the road, nature, and promote the personal independence and family solidarity of preindustrial times.¹⁹

Los Angeles Athletic Club

Hoping to cash in on mobile Los Angelenos searching for leisure activities outside their ever-expanding city, the Los Angeles Athletic Club sought to convert the southwestern portion of the Lower Topanga area into a nautical as well as an automobile-oriented vacation destination. One of the oldest organizations of its kind, the LAAC was founded in 1880 as a men's athletic and recreation club. Among its members, who were some of the most influential men in the Greater Los Angeles area, was former mayor Frederick Eaton, who along with William Mulholland, had been influential in bringing Owens River Water to Los Angeles. Newspaper publishers Harry Chandler and William A. Spalding, along with land developers James P. Lankershim and his son-in-law Isaac Newton Van Nuys, were influential in developing real estate in the San Fernando Valley.²⁰

It might have been by coincidence or design that the LAAC chose to purchase the 1,800-plus acre tract of land in the Lower Topanga Canyon area from its current owners Eli P. Clark, Moses H. Sherman and Robert Gillis. Pioneer developers of Los Angeles electric railway system during the 1890s, Clark and his brother-in-law Sherman, like Spalding, Lankershim and Van Nuys, were also involved in land development in the nearby San Fernando Valley. Robert Gillis, who still retained a one-ninth interest in the parcel, was co-founder of the Santa Monica Mountain Park Company, which was also involved in selling and developing the nearby Castellammare tract at the end of Sunset Boulevard. Gillis, though the Santa Monica Mountain Park Company, was also playing a key role in selling a \$2 million tract to LAAC. Beginning in 1923, he was involved in negotiations with LAAC by which they would partner in the development of the 640-acre California Riviera subdivision in the Santa Monica Canyon area. As part of the deal, LAAC would get ten acres free for their Riviera Country Club and Golf Course. The Lower Topanga Canyon Acquisition, only a few miles away, was to be developed into a beach and yacht club with a \$1.5 million-dollar breakwater and harbor. The remaining land would be used for backcountry activities.²¹

LAAC's acquisition and plans for the development of the Lower Topanga Canyon area is part of the larger regional trend throughout the mountains and beaches surrounding the Greater Los Angeles area. Initially established during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, country and yacht clubs were a means to preserve and express class-consciousness among Los Angeles' wealthy upper middle class. Through membership in such exclusive organizations, they could express their own interpretation of *noblesse oblige*: the obligation of honorable, generous, and responsible behavior associated with persons of high rank (or wealth). The purchase and conversion of raw land into more useful golf

¹⁹ Young and Young, *Pacific Palisades*, 97; and Warren James Belasco, *Americans on the Road* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1979), 3-4.

²⁰ Leonard and Dale Pitt, *Los Angeles: A to Z*, 84, 130, 238, 264, 480 and 522; Downtown News (7 November 1994), 34; and (16 November 1998), 28.

²¹ Leonard and Dale Pitt, *Los Angeles: A to Z*, 96, 130 and 465; Betty Lou Young, *Our First Century: The Los Angeles Athletic Club 1880-1980* (Los Angeles: LAAC Press, 1980), 120; and Young and Young, *Pacific Palisades*, 97 and 122-124.

courses, horse polo fields and riding trails, shooting and hunting ranges or yacht harbors, was seen as benefiting the general community by increasing the usefulness of what was referred to as "marginal" land. Strategically located at the intersection of two major highways, the yacht club would be easily accessible by automobile and greatly benefit the surrounding area. If, in the case of the Riviera Country Club, some of their members developing land in the area made money off the deal, then so much the better. Oddly enough, this was not the case at Lower Topanga Canyon; the proposed yacht club and harbor development never left the planning stage. Perhaps it was the prevailing economic climate, which foreshadowed the impending Stock Market Crash, but a disturbing number of exclusive athletic and country clubs were closing by mid-1927.²²

Topanga Beach's "Tent City"

In spite of, or as a result of the yacht club project failure, by the late 1920s the Lower Topanga Canyon Acquisition area did not remain undeveloped. Contemporary accounts and historic photographs best illustrate this point. For example, Francis Brunner's description of the stage stop at the *Topanga Beach Tent City* included "cabin accommodations."²³ This is a bit of an understatement, as the subsequent historic photographs taken between 1923 and 1933 show Topanga Beach as a vibrant beach-oriented coastal community containing cabins, cottages, stores, and other beach and automobile tourist-oriented enterprises.

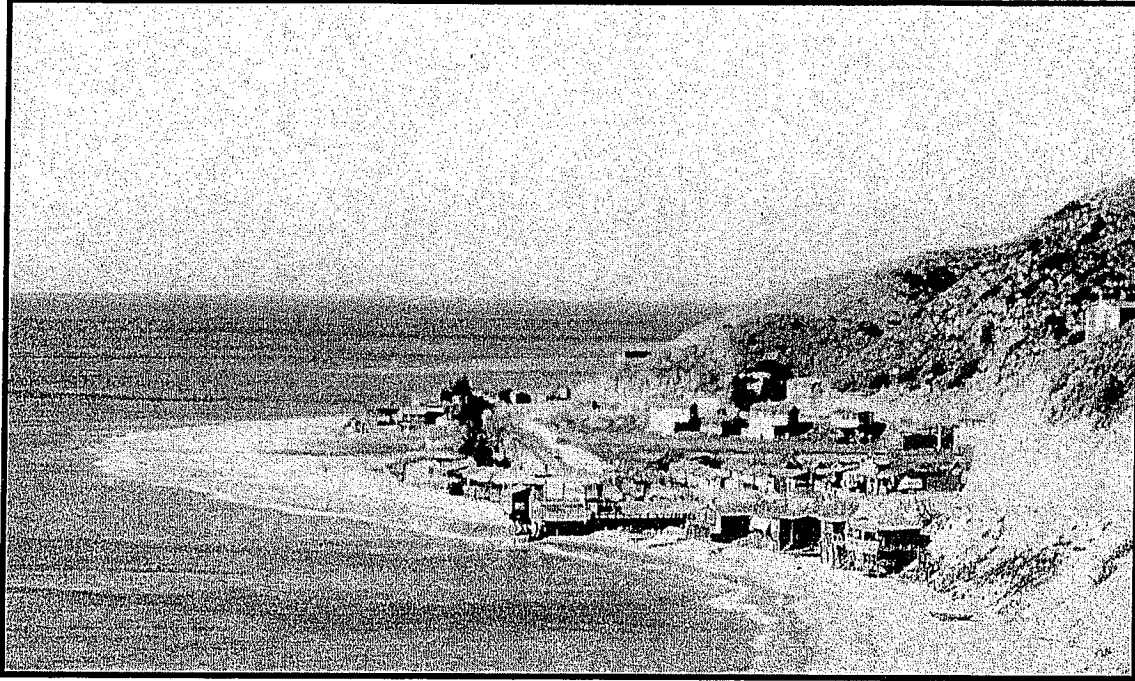
Photograph No. 1, taken from the hillside east of the intersection of the old Topanga and the Malibu roads clearly shows that the "Old Malibu Road" did not cross the mouth of the wide lagoon at the Topanga Creek outfall. Instead it detoured inland around the base of the hillside. A 1921 California Highway Commission report stated that "difficulties in securing the right-of-way have [forced the abandonment of] a direct line across the mouth of Topanga Canyon and [to] adopt one less direct and more expensive to construct." Subsequent photographs will show that, because of this, motorists had to cross a wooden bridge across the creek some 300 yards from its mouth. Again referring to Photograph No. 1, a group of cars is gathered at the tip of Topanga Point, their occupants clustered in groups or bathing in the surf. Across the lagoon is a low sandbar, which explains how the cordsmen could have crossed the mouth of the Topanga Cañada while surveying the former rancho's boundaries. The photograph also shows other cars parked along the road's edge at the southwest base of the conical knoll that still sits between the present location of the Malibu Feed Bin and the Reel Inn restaurant. Their occupants appear to be setting up a tent and starting a picnic fire on the beach below a steep embankment. The only other activity is centered around what appears to be a ranch house or cabin on a sandy terrace upcoast of the knoll.²⁴

²² Leonard and Dale Pitt, *Los Angeles: A to Z*, 104 and 565; Young, *Our First Century*, 120; and Young and Young, *Pacific Palisades*, 112 and 125.

²³ Brunner, *Southern California's Prettiest Drive*, 8.

²⁴ Pacific Palisades Historical Society, *West from Topanga Road*, ca. 1923; and California Highway Commission, *Preliminary Report on a Proposed State Highway VII-L.A.-60-B*, 4.

Photograph No. 1: *West from Topanga Road, ca. 1923* (Source: Topanga Historical Society, Tegner Photograph Collection)



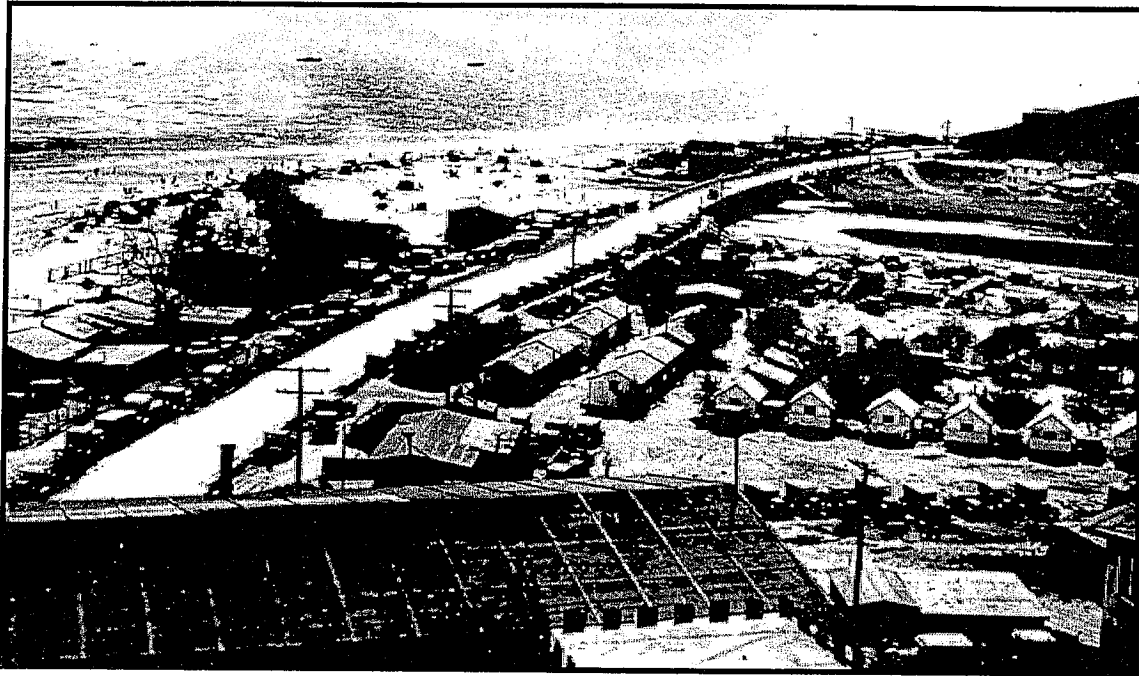
Photograph No. 2: *Topanga Beach, Roosevelt Highway, ca. 1929* (Source: Topanga Historical Society, Tegner Photograph Collection)

Photograph No. 2, taken sometime after the realignment of the Old Malibu Road in 1929 into the two-lane concrete Roosevelt Memorial Highway and bridge across the lagoon's mouth. It shows the eastern approach to the intersection of the coast highway and Topanga Canyon Road. A small building

peeks out at the brush-capped knoll's southeastern base. The knoll shows signs that its southern slope has been cut back further to facilitate the widening of the new highway. At least sixty structures,

peeks out at the brush-capped knoll's southeastern base. The knoll shows signs that its southern slope has been cut back further to facilitate the widening of the new highway. At least sixty structures, ranging from seaside cottages to roadside cabins, can be seen in this picture. There even appears to be a dock or fishing pier of some sort in the lower middle section of the photograph.¹

Photograph No. 3: 1920's Vacation Tents, Topanga Creek Lagoon in Background, ca. 1929
(Source: Topanga Historical Society—Tegner Photograph Collection)



Subsequent photographs show the extent of the development. Photograph No. 3, taken from the knoll's western slope verifies the Highway Commission's statement that "On Sundays and holidays this is one of the heaviest traveled roads in the vicinity of Los Angeles. The traffic consists mostly of automobiles on pleasure or sightseeing trips." This can be seen in the rows of parked cars lining the coast highway's shoulders approaching the new reinforced concrete Topanga Creek Bridge. The road's raised causeway now acts as a dam, preventing the lagoon from forming toward the sandbar²

The photograph also gives a closer look at "Tent City," a small vacation village occupying a low sandy terrace in a basin north of the Coast Road, between the knoll and the creek's outflow channel. At least _ of the former lagoon area appears to be filled in on either side of the road's raised embankment. A row of gable ended bungalows sit perpendicular to the road along the beach. Anchored off shore are pleasure craft that may belong to the local Topanga Beach Yacht Club. A large number of tents are set up along the beach's sand bar and directly in the outflow area south of the bridge (evidently at low tide).³

A more romantic color-tinted view of the area appears in a contemporary post card. Titled, "*Cooper's Camp, Tent City at Topanga Canyon, California*," it shows the ocean waves dangerously close to the bridge. Other enigmatic features include two spindly towers. One, north of the bridge, appears to be a

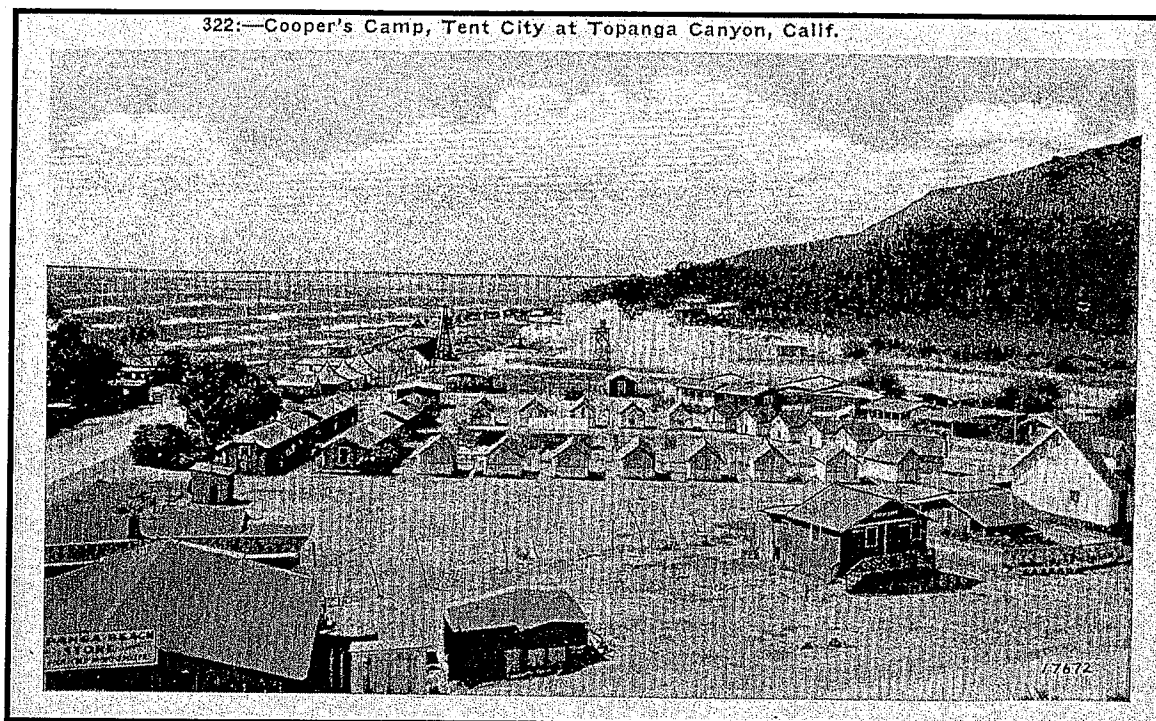
¹ Ibid., *Topanga Beach, Roosevelt Highway*, ca. 1929; and "Magnificent Highway is Formally Opened, California Highways and Public Works (July-August 1929): 6.

² California Highway Commission, *Preliminary Report*, 3.

³ Topanga Historical Society, *1920's Vacation Tents, Topanga Creek Lagoon in Background*, ca. 1929; and *The Palisadian*, 3 June 1932, 6.

derrick, while the other, slightly upstream, resembles either a watch or water tower. Adding to the mystery is an upright donkey engine spewing a voluminous cloud of steam that is partially obscuring Old Malibu Road. The post card also give's a clear illustration of "Cooper's Camp," its rows of clean white cabins resembling more a military base than a vacation camp. Also seen in the card's lower right-hand corner is the high, dormer gable roof of the Wood family cottage. In the card's opposite corner is the roof of the *Topanga Beach Store*, which, according to its sign, sold "cold drinks and groceries."⁴

Illustration No. 1: Cooper's Camp, Tent City at Topanga Canyon, California, ca. 1924 (Source: Pacific Palisades Historical Society, Randy Young Collection)

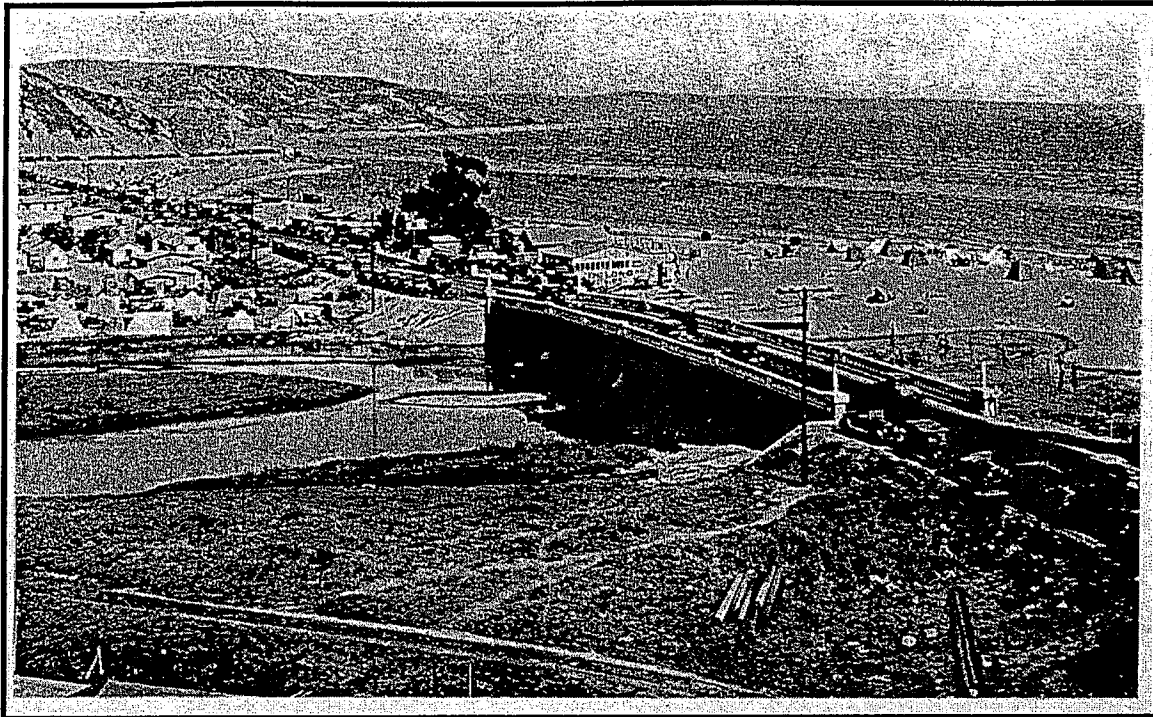


Both Cooper's Camp and the Topanga Beach Store are typical economic ventures associated with the growth of beach communities along Santa Monica Bay during the first quarter of the 20th century. It is what urban geographer Reyner Banham defines as the second phase in the development of "Surfurbia," the line of beach communities stretching from the Malibu Strip to the Balboa peninsula at Newport Beach. The first phase occurred between the early 1870s and 1920, when stagecoach, steam and electric railroad lines reached out from land-locked Los Angeles to Santa Monica and other coastal towns like Venice, Huntington and Redondo Beach. The second phase, of which the development of Lower Topanga Canyon's Tent City is a part, occurred from 1920 to 1930 and was definitely linked to the massive availability of mass-produced affordable automobiles. Post-World War I Southern Californians, including some 200,000 out-of-town visitors by 1925, now had the money and leisure time to spend on automobile touring. Most were clamoring for wider and straighter roads from urban areas out to outlying beach, mountain, and desert communities. The issuing of a state gasoline sales tax, vehicle registration and commercial weight fees allowed funds to maintain, repair, widen, and build new state highways for the more than one and a half million registered motorists.⁵

⁴ Pacific Palisades Historical Society, "Cooper's Camp, Tent City at Topanga Canyon, California," ca. 1925; and George and Kathryn Wood, Letter to Virginia Haynes (10 October 2001), 1.

⁵ Reyner Banham, *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 14, 21 and 29; and Richard R. Mathison, *Three Cars in Every Garage: A Motorist's History of the Automobile and the*

Photograph No. 4: *Mouth of Topanga Canyon, ca. 1929* (Source: Olmsted Brothers, Bartholomew and Associates, *Parks, Playgrounds and Beaches for the Los Angeles Regions, 72*)



As new and improved roads and highways spread out into suburban and exurban areas, auto camps like Cooper's began to follow suit along major touring routes. An assemblage of tents or simple cabins, they were often situated on vacant land not far from reputable businesses like the Topanga Beach Store or a gas station that could meet the needs of the auto tourist. Besides, the land or lease agreement was relatively cheap, with lower taxes and zoning restrictions than in urban areas. Strategically located near the intersection of the Coast Highway and Topanga Canyon Boulevard, the Cooper's Auto Camp could appeal to ocean bathers as well as those wishing to hike up the canyon. Besides "roughing it" in tent cabins, visitors seeking more comfort and privacy could stay in small wooden cabins. Initiated nation-wide in 1925, they featured good beds, linen sheets, kitchenettes, and indoor plumbing. Historians have equated the marriage of modestly equipped but comfortable rental cabins with automobile tourism as the birth of the motel industry in America.⁶

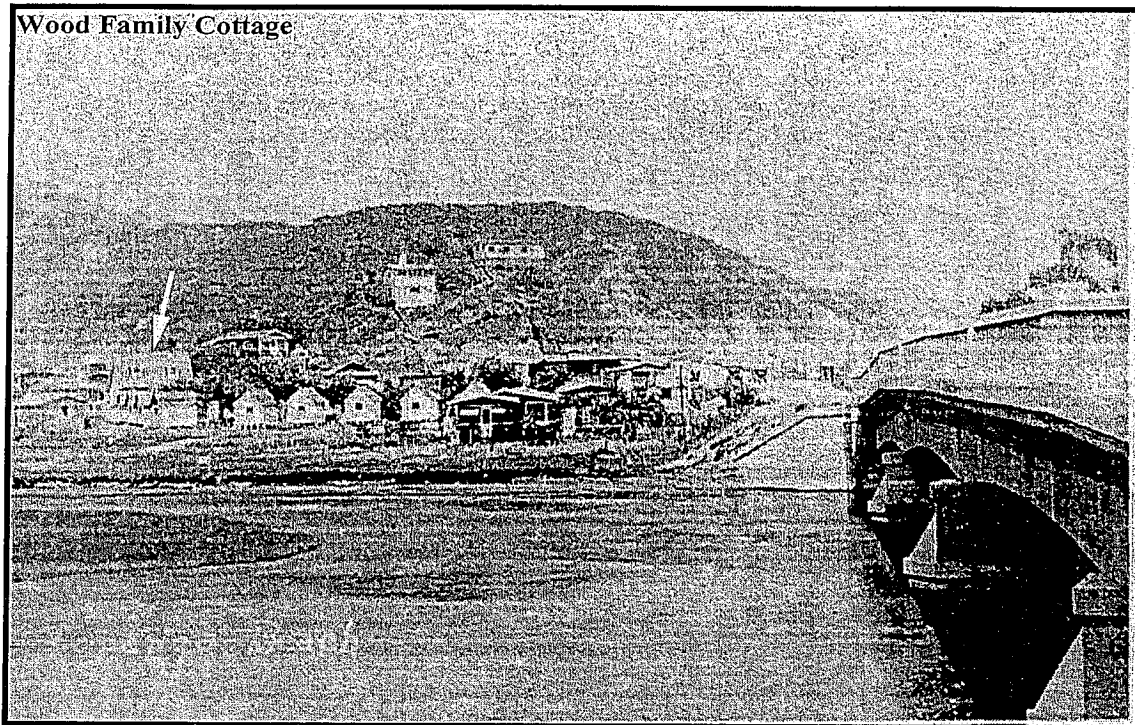
As the previous and following photographs reveal, Topanga Canyon Beach's Tent City was one of the most popular tourist destinations along the new Coast Highway. The long lines of cars parked along the highway's shoulders in Photographs No. 3 and 4 prove this. The broad sandy beach at Topanga Point features cabana tents along the shore, while several beach and highway-oriented businesses line the highway's eastern approach to the Topanga Creek Bridge. Photograph No. 5 gives a fisherman's

Automobile Club in Southern California (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1968), 56, 62-63, 66, 68-69, 73-74, 90 and 92.

⁶ Belasco, *Americans on the Road*, 4; and John A. Jakle, Keith A. Sculle and Jefferson S. Rogers. *The Motel in America* (Baltimore and London, John Hopkins University Press, 1996), 291 and 293.

view of the bridge's reinforced concrete piers, balustrades, and abutments, as well as the tent city's dense development, which has grown up around the Wood Family Cottage.¹

Photograph No. 5: Topanga Creek Passing under Roosevelt Highway, ca. 1929 (Source: Basten, *Main Street to Malibu*, 76)

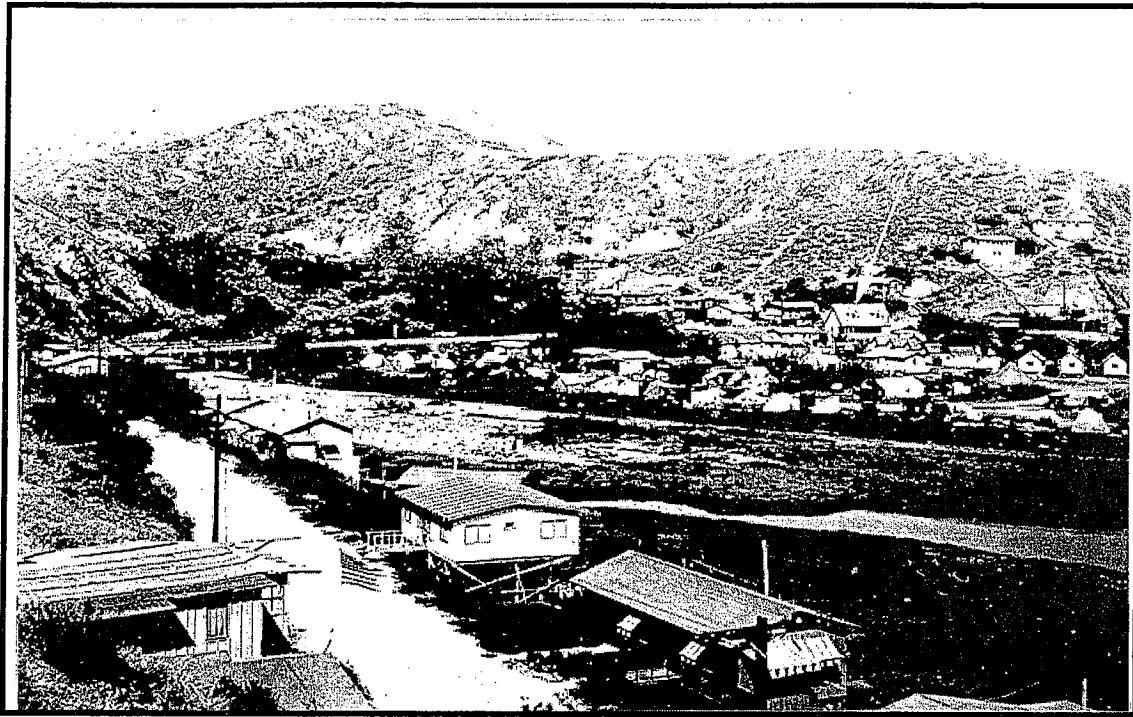


When viewed from across the creek in Photographs 5 and 6, Topanga Beach's "Tent City" resembles a small hamlet rather than the LAAC's abortive attempt to create a yacht club and marina. Besides Cooper's Auto Camp, several closely spaced cabins and low bungalows fill the old "*enseñada*" between the creek and the knoll's base. These are substantial vacation homes, especially the Wood Family Cottage (see arrow), built on cabin sites that the LAAC leased to residents. Photographs 7 and 8 also show the route of the "Old Malibu Road." Lined with split-level gable roof cabins along the creek's western banks, it crosses over the creek by means of what appears to be a wooden truss bridge. The road continues around a brush and tree-covered ridgeline to a row of cabins wrapping along the knoll's northwestern base toward the Rodeo Grounds. A familiar feature in Photographs 5-7 is the distinct high roofline of the Wood Family Cottage. Subsequent correspondence with members of the family indicates that it was relocated to its current address at 3427 Topanga Canyon Boulevard in 1932. Although relocated, it was done over 50 years ago and is one of the few surviving homes within the Lower Topanga Canyon Acquisition area that can be tied to the Tent City area.²

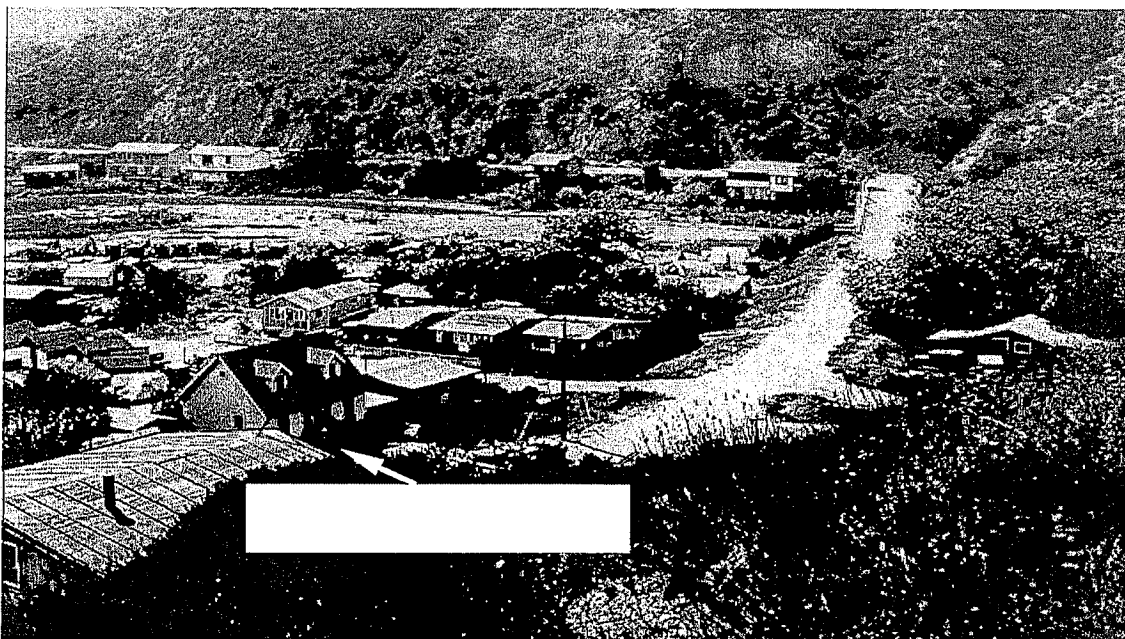
¹ Fred E. Basten, *Main Street to Malibu: All New Photographs of Celebrated Scenes and Memorabilia, Yesterday and Today* (Santa Monica: Graphic Press, 1980), 76; and Olmsted Brothers, Bartholomew and Associates, *Parks, Playgrounds and Beaches for the Los Angeles Region, A Report Submitted for the Citizens on Parks, Playgrounds, and Beaches* (Los Angeles: Authors, 1930), 72; and Topanga Historical Society, Tegner Photograph Collection, *1920s Vacation Tents, Topanga Creek Lagoon in Background*, ca. 1929.

² Topanga Historical Society, Tegner Photograph Collection *Lagoon, Rodeo Grounds, Sunset Mesa at Top*, ca. 1929; *Topanga Lagoon, Looking at the Old Malibu Road*, ca. 1929, *Topanga Road, Old Malibu Road, Looking at Entrance to Topanga Canon*, ca. 1929; Basten, *Main Street to Malibu*, 76; and Wood, Letter to Haynes, 1.

Photograph No. 6: *Topanga Lagoon, Looking at Sunset Mesa in Background*, ca. 1929 (Source: Topanga Historical Society—Tegner Photograph Collection)



Photograph No. 7: *Topanga Lagoon, Looking at the Old Malibu Road*, ca. 1929 (Source: Topanga Historical Society—Tegner Photograph Collection)

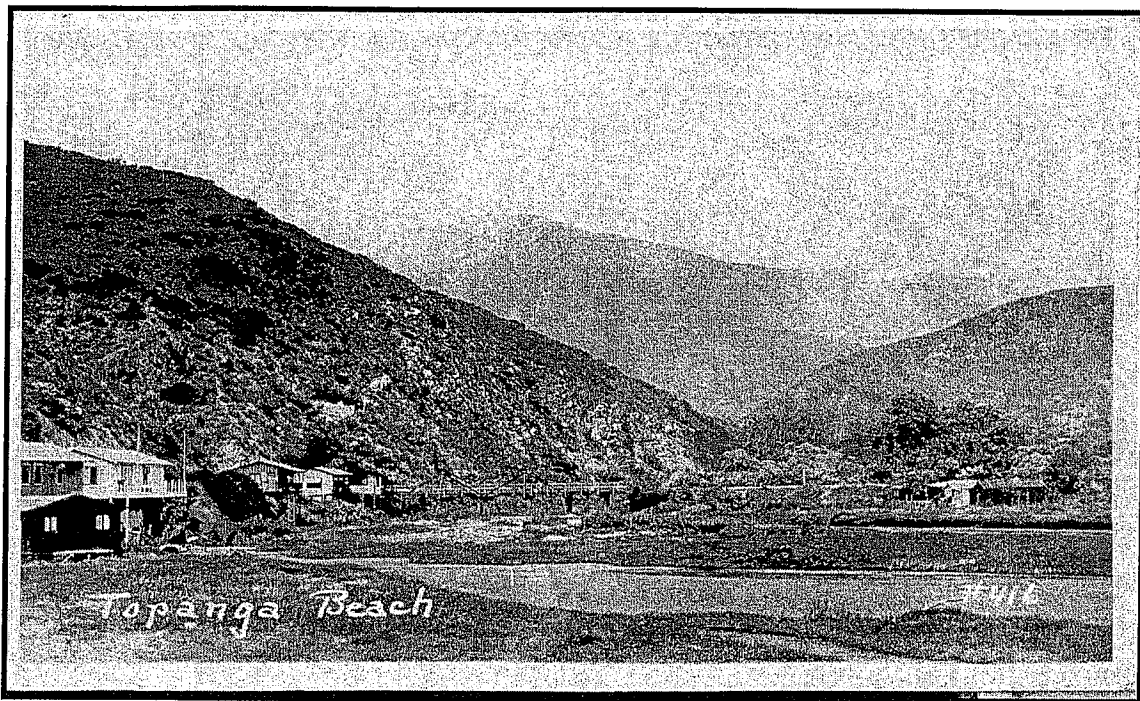


The “Modernization” of Topanga Beach and Lagoon

The reasons that forced the Woods to relocate their beach cottage in 1932, were part of the growing evolution of the Lower Topanga Canyon Acquisition’s lower southwestern section. Two years earlier, in 1930, Los Angeles County spent nearly \$100,000 in road improvements to Topanga Canyon Boulevard. The work, which widened the roadway and straightened out dangerous blind curves, helped to increase the flow of traffic to and from western San Fernando Valley. In doing so, however, the increased amount of traffic created a bottleneck of cars at both approaches to the Topanga Creek

Bridge. As a stopgap measure, the State Department of Public Highways widened the existing bridge and roadway in the summer of 1931. State Department of Public Highways district engineer S. V. Cortelyou explained in the local *Palisadian* newspaper that the entire length of highway between Santa Monica and Ventura County was to be improved. The project called for the road to be straightened and widened from a two-lane to an 80-foot-wide asphaltic concrete-covered four-lane highway. The work was due in part to the state's acquisition of a new right-of-way easement through a section of the nearby Malibu Ranch north of Point Dume. In addition to this area, the new alignment sought to install a safer more modern coast highway. Besides providing more travel lanes, the realignment would eliminate dangerous curves and increase the motorists' field of vision. It would also take most of the present Coast Road away from the shoreline, allowing for new residential beach development.¹

Photograph No. 8: Topanga Lagoon, Old Malibu Road, ca. 1929 (Source: Topanga Historical Society—Tegner Photograph Collection)



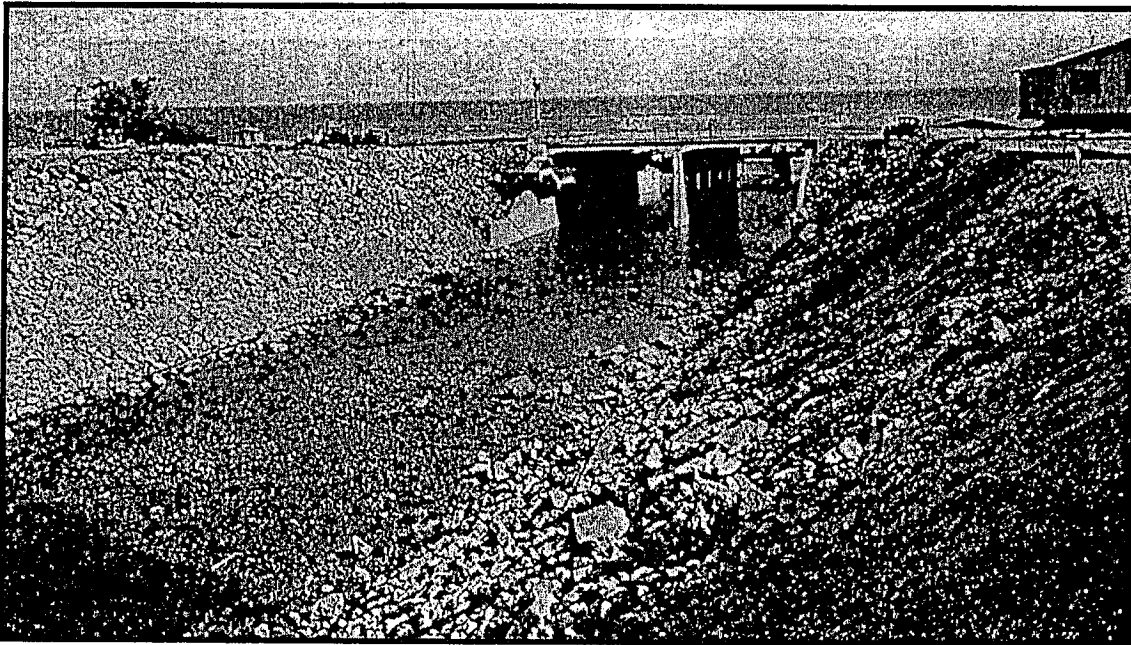
Despite the country being in the throes of the Great Depression at this time, the Coast Road project was able to commence because of Federal public relief dollars. Initiated as part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal Program, such programs as the Public Works Administration (PWA) and the Civil Works Administration (CWA) helped to fund and administer various public works projects throughout the nation. Besides being directly involved in such projects as the construction of public buildings, bridges, dams, and road developments, the PWA also made loans to states and municipalities for similar projects. The result was nearly \$7 million for the completion of a large number of civil engineering projects, which provided jobs for thousands of unemployed skilled and unskilled workers. Augmenting the federal monies was the constantly increasing state revenues from growing automobile registration and gas tax revenues. In 1931 the State Highway Commission authorized the distribution of \$962,000 in road improvement funds to Southern California. Organizations like the California State Automobile Association and the Automobile Club of Southern

¹ Mathison, *Three Cars in Every Garage*, 153; *The Palisadian*, 12 August 1932, 1 and 25 October 1932, 3 *California Highways and Public Works*, August 1931, 23; and *Western Construction News* (10 May 1930), 233-234; *Southwest Builder and Contractor*, 12 June 1933, 11.

California had lobbied the Commission to allocate the funds for the construction of an additional 3,724 miles of new roads in Southern California. Their leaders believed that the state and the nation's economic recovery was "just around the corner," and that the new roads would stimulate the economy by providing jobs and promoting auto-oriented tourism.²

A major problem encountered during the Coast Road project was what to do with the spoil, the earth and rock excavated during the road's realignment and widening. Skirting the base of the mountains, it was necessary to cut back and widen a considerable portion of the precipitous cliff along the 4.1-mile section between Santa Ynez and Las Flores canyons. The heavy grading job involved the removal of an estimated 800,000 cubic yards of spoil, mostly soft and shattered sandstone and shale, with occasional conglomerate mixed with silt and clay. Averaging about 200,000 cubic yards per mile, there were few spots available along the right-of-way sufficient enough to dispose of the total yardage; and dumping it along the beaches was out of the question. Someone suggested loading it onto barges then dumping their contents out in deep water. This idea proved untenable since it would cost more than \$.90 per cubic yard or \$720,000 to do so. The decision was then made to deposit approximately 650,000 cubic yards of spoil in the basin or lagoon at the Topanga Creek outlet. This would reduce the price for hauling and dumping the road spoil to around \$.25 a cubic yard.³

Photograph No. 9: New Bridge over Topanga Creek, 1933 (Source: *Southwest Builder and Contractor*, 12 June 1933, 12)



Begun in February 1933, the Topanga Creek fill was the largest in point of area and yardage made in connection with Coast Highway construction project between Santa Ynez and Las Flores canyons. A fleet of 30 heavy-duty dump trucks dropped between 5-7 cubic yards of rock and soil, while bulldozers spread the material in 8-inch layers. Laborers then watered and rolled the area to have the fill conform to then standard state highway specifications. The State Highway Department operated a soil laboratory on

² *California Highways and Public Works*, August 1931, 23; *Southwest Builder and Contractor* (12 June 1933): 11; Mathison, *Three Cars in Every Garage*, 105, 153, 163 and 165; and Margaret Bing, *A Brief Overview of the WPA* (Bienes Center for the Literary Arts, <http://www.co.broward.fl.us/lii10204.htm>).

³ California Highway Commission, *Preliminary Report on a Proposed State Highway VII-L.A.-60-B*, 4; *Southwest Builder and Contractor*, 12 June 1933, 11.

site to test for proper compaction. Completed in August 1933, the area adjacent to the highway's north shoulder had been raised some 8-10 feet.⁴

Another major alteration to the area was the replacement of the recently widened bridge across Topanga Creek. The new, shorter 79-foot long reinforced concrete bridge's span was reduced from four to two channels (see Photograph No. 9). The California Division of Highway's designers wanted a narrower span to produce a high velocity waterway "adequate enough to carry the flood waters that rush down from the Topanga watershed in the mountains at periods in the rainy season." An interesting feature included a pedestrian sidewalk cantilevered out from the east abutment, which allowed pedestrians to pass under the highway.⁵

Concurrent with the improvements done to the Coast Highway, extensive improvements were being done to the connecting Topanga Canyon Boulevard. Between 1930 and 1933, Los Angeles County had spent nearly \$100,000 on road widening and realignment. On September 5, 1933, the County Board of Supervisors approved the reclassification of the road from a county to Secondary State Highway, Route 27.⁶

As all this work was going on, the owner and operators of the businesses and cabins along Roosevelt Memorial Highway, between Topanga Canyon Boulevard and the new bridge, were given the opportunity to remain in the area. The State Division of Highways agreed to "preserve the buildings and place them on new foundations on the completed fill." For example, the current owner of the auto camp, C. F. Whitney, filed a building permit to "Alter [an] Auto Camp, [at] Roosevelt Highway and Topanga Canyon." Careful comparison of the pre-1933 photograph with those taken ca. 1938 and 1940 suggest that Whitney recycled a good number of the camp's small wood-frame cabins on the new site.⁷

Renamed the *Topanga Beach Auto Court*, it featured a new, more symmetrical arrangement of the cabins along a triangular inner courtyard. Although it has experienced some degree of alteration over the years, the current *Topanga Ranch Motel* still embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period and style of vernacular American architecture—the locally owned and operated tourist automobile court motel of the early 1930s. Its use of small cabins arranged around an intimate courtyard reflects the transitional period of roadside American motel evolution between the sprawling autocamp and the more formal nationally franchised motor court. During the Depression, many automobile travelers chose to take short weekend runs to local beaches or mountain areas like Topanga Beach and Canyon. To save money, they often stayed at low-cost "cottage camps" instead of more expensive hotels. The proprietors often upgraded the facilities to suit the tastes of these fastidious and economy-seeking travelers. Historian Warren James Belasco credits this in part, "to the skill and ambition of roadside entrepreneurs." "But," he continues, "the main responsibility lay with the middle-class market they pursued." As anti-modern gypsies, these tourists wanted simplicity, self-sufficiency, and comradeship. As modern consumers, they valued comfort, service, and security. Small cabins like those at the Topanga Beach Auto Court often reduced tensions involved in family motoring. The clean beach and nearby mountain trails were a happy medium between "roughing it" in

⁴ *Southwest Builder and Contractor*, 12 June 1933, 11-12.

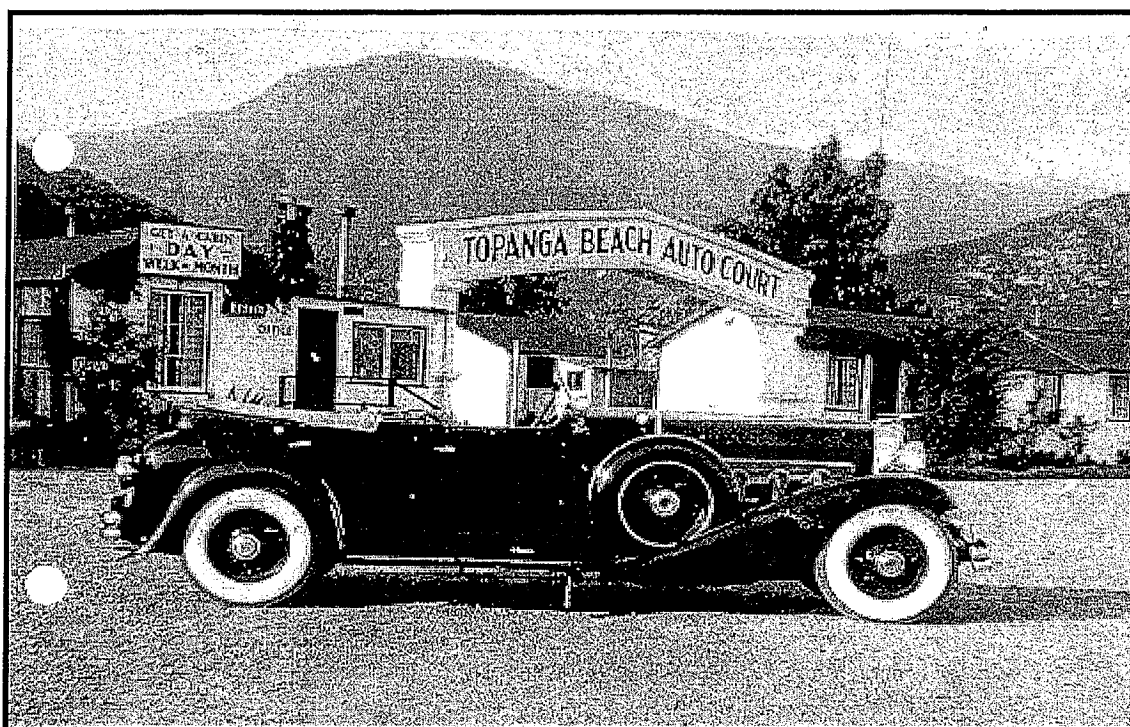
⁵ *Ibid.*; and California State Division of Highways, *Bridge Report, Bridge No. 53-35, Topanga Creek* (7 February 1940), 1.

⁶ Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, *In Re State Secondary Highway System: Resolution Approving List of Highways in Los Angeles County Taken over by California Highway Commission for Maintenance and Construction* (Los Angeles: County of Los Angeles, 5 September 1933), 1; and K. D. Lewis and Robert W. Akin, "Topanga Canyon: Major Reconstruction Project on Sign Route 27 Is Completed" (July/August 1956), 23.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 11; and "L. A. County Building Permits," No. 780, 30 June 1933, n.p.; and USGS Topographic Map, *Topanga*, 1928, 1932, and 1952.

the country, and at the same time sleeping in something more comfortable and secure than a flimsy canvas tent. The open court also had its appeal, offering guests the convenience of being able to park their cars next to their cabin. As seen in Photograph No. 10, the auto court appealed to the up-scale Pierce Arrow as well as the Chevy and Ford-driving motorists.¹

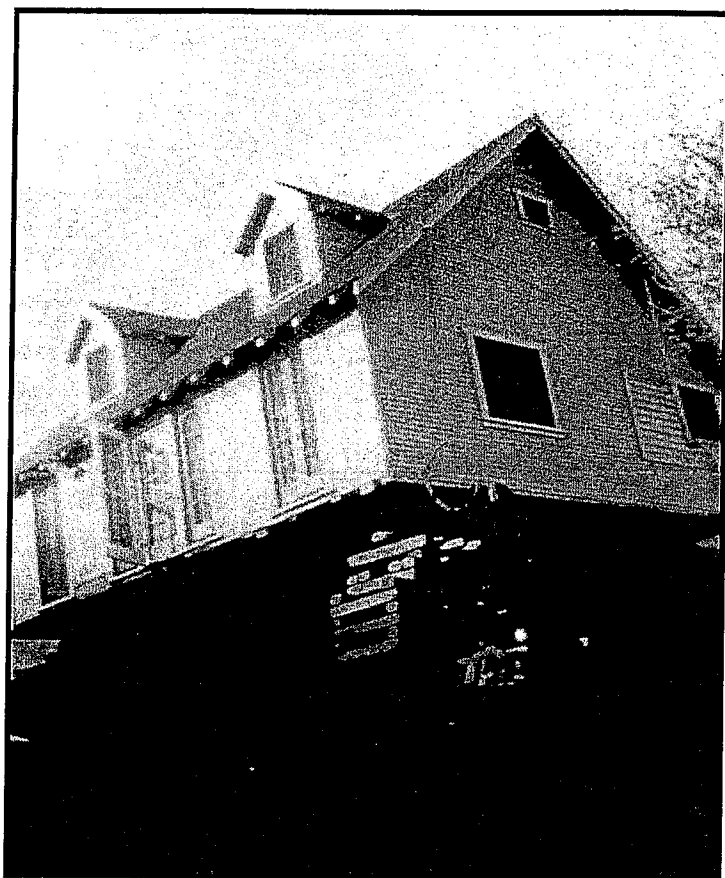
Photograph No. 10. *Topanga Beach Auto Court*, ca. 1938 (Source: Topanga Historical Society)



During the late 1930s, as the nation slowly recovered from the Depression, an increasing number of out-of-state auto-tourists regarded Southern California, as well as Florida and Texas, as vacation destinations. Many continued to stay at roadside auto courts, but now convenience, not especially price, was their main concern. To stay ahead, local owner/operators invested in hotel-class equipment like indoor plumbing, sturdier construction, spring mattresses, separate kitchenettes with gas ranges, refrigerators, and dinette sets. In fact, motor court cabin-building and upgrading was, according to Belasco, “one of the bright spots in an otherwise disastrous period for the [American] construction industry.” The success of the refurbished and updated auto court or “motor hotel” seemed to prove that the American entrepreneur system still worked, and confirmed the automobile’s place in the center of Southern California life. Yet, after World War II, the small-scale “mom-and-pop” auto court operators could no longer compete with larger regional or nation-wide “motel” chains. Surprisingly, the Topanga Ranch Motel has been able to survive. Due in part to its quaint, “retro” look, the motel has been used as an attractive location for Hollywood film and television productions.²

¹ Belasco, *Americans on the Road*, 4-5 and 143; and Topanga Historical Society, “Topanga Beach Auto Court, ca. 1938.

² *Ibid.*, 143-145, 156 and 164; Virginia Haynes, *Interview with Author* (01 October 2001); and Ray Craig, *Interview with Author* (18 September 2001).



Contemporary permit data in the Southwest Builder and Contractor suggests that others may have relocated out of the former tent city. In June 1933, Frank J. Longo filed for a permit to repair a 26 x 28 2-story, composition-roofed frame dwelling at No. 8 Roosevelt Highway. Unfortunately, unless Longo or his descendents can be located, there is no way to cross-reference the building's 1933 address with the existing buildings along Pacific Coast Highway.³

Photograph No. 11. *Wood Family Cottage*, 1932 (Source: George and Kathryn Wood)

Besides the cabins at the current Topanga Ranch Motel, the only other surviving building from the lower basin that has remained relatively unchanged since its move is the *Wood Family Cottage*. A vintage photograph obtained by members of the surviving Wood family show it after it was raised on wood timber cribs prior to its being transported from the tent city to its present

location at 3427 Topanga Canyon Boulevard in 1932 (See Photograph No. 11).

The building is also significant architecturally. Again using the 1932 photograph for comparison, the small, 1 1/2-story cottage is relatively unchanged, and is an excellent example of an early 20th century Cape Cod style vacation cottage. Recognized as a unique vernacular American house type for over 200 years, it was a highly popular carpenter/contractor-built home during the 1920s, surviving well into 1960's suburbia⁴

The period between 1933 and 1940 was a time of dynamic flux for the Lower Topanga Canyon Acquisition area. A number of early cottages around the perimeter of the former lower basin have either remained in place or have been relocated along Old Malibu Road. A number of permits have been located that indicate several new dwellings were also built outside the basin between May and June 1933. For example, J. R. Hunt filed a permit to erect a 26-x-28 frame dwelling on Roosevelt Highway. Likewise Elsie Yoes filed a permit to build a 15-x-30 dwelling on Rodeo Road at "Cabin Site No. 47." And Betty M. King hired a contractor to build a single-story frame dwelling for herself at 39 Topango [sic] Lane. However, it is difficult to determine if these buildings are still standing, because there is no way to corroborate their original locations with current addresses..⁵

³ *Southwest Builder and Contractor*, "L. A. County Building Permits," No. 669 (23 June 1933), n.p. and No. 745 (30 June 1933), 55.

⁴ George and Kathryn Wood, *Letter to Virginia Haynes*, 1; Maurie Van Buren, *House Styles at a Glance: An Illustrated Guide* (Atlanta: Longstreet Press, 1991), 14; Herbert Gottfried and Jan Jennings, *American Vernacular Design, 1870-1940* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1988), 192; and National Park Service, *National Register Bulletin No. 15*, 2 and 41.

⁵ *Southwest Builder and Contractor*, Los Angeles County Building Permits, No. 313, 26, May 1933, n.p.; 669, 30 June 1933, 54.

Besides the removal of the tent city, the most dramatic event to occur at Topanga Beach was the first of a series of disastrous fires. The first, reported on November 23, 1938, started on the Trippet Ranch and fed by strong winds, roared down Topanga Canyon to the beach in 45 minutes. The ensuing four-day brush fire destroyed many homes and cabins in its path. Local historian Louise York estimates that as many as 118 homes and garages at the canyon's mouth were destroyed. Evidence of the fire's destruction can still be seen in the charred remains of several abandoned cabin sites in the study area.⁶

Postwar Change

The study area remained relatively in stasis during World War II. The only event of note was the transfer of ownership of the beach frontage in 1944 to LAAC by its then owner, William Randolph Hearst. Hearst, who had previously bought the tract from its original owner, Robert Gillis, had divided the tract into 5-year tent or cabin leases on 50 beach sites. Cancelable on 90 days notice, the leases applied to approximately 125 homes built along the beach between 1941 and 1956. During the war, ground rental fees were \$15 a month, raised to \$17.50 and later to \$50.⁷

In response to an increase in automobile traffic during the postwar period, between 1955 and 1956 a three-mile section of Topanga Canyon Boulevard 3.6 miles north of PCH was graded and paved. This created a uniform standard of alignment and width along the entire route from Woodland Hills to the beach. The underlying purpose was to provide a safer route for what was described as "an exodus of people from the San Fernando Valley to the beach." A new generation of visitors and residents began to filter into the Lower Topanga Canyon Acquisition area. Among these were retirees and members of the ever-expanding Hollywood movie colony that had been coming to the Malibu/Topanga area since the 1920s. Long-range commuters between the valley, Santa Monica and Culver City were also attracted to the area's rustic seclusion. Instead of small, rustic vacation cabins, they built what has been described as "more conventional and permanent homes." Over time, the residential community has developed into a "rural and informal—even bohemian lifestyle." Critics have also described the area as possessing homes that are "in fair to poor condition, evidencing accrued depreciation." Until recently, LAACO (Its corporate logo was changed in 1975) had many of these "dilapidated" structures torn down.⁸

During the postwar years, 1947 to 1960, several new leaseholders began to build small commercial buildings along Pacific Coast Highway (The name Roosevelt Memorial Highway had been out of use by then). The oldest of these, *Wylie's Bait Shop*, was established in 1947 by Willis B. and Ruth B. Wylie. The Wylies were well-known local business people who were instrumental in developing and promoting sports fishing in Santa Monica Bay. Still highly regarded among the area's sports fishing aficionados, the Wylies' daughter still runs the business, reportedly one of the oldest continuously owned and operated family-run businesses in the Malibu/Lower Topanga coastline area.⁹

The design of the new businesses that came to the area reflected the simple, yet functional geometric abstract modernism of the time. Large raking roofs with wide overhangs, multi-paned front sales areas, and prominent roof-mounted signs meant to capture the attention passing drivers were all typical roadside commercial design features from the late 1940s to the mid-1960s. Some of these elements

⁶ *California: A Guide to the Golden State*, 416; and York, *The Topanga Story*, 149-150.

⁷ Young, *Our First Century*, 149.

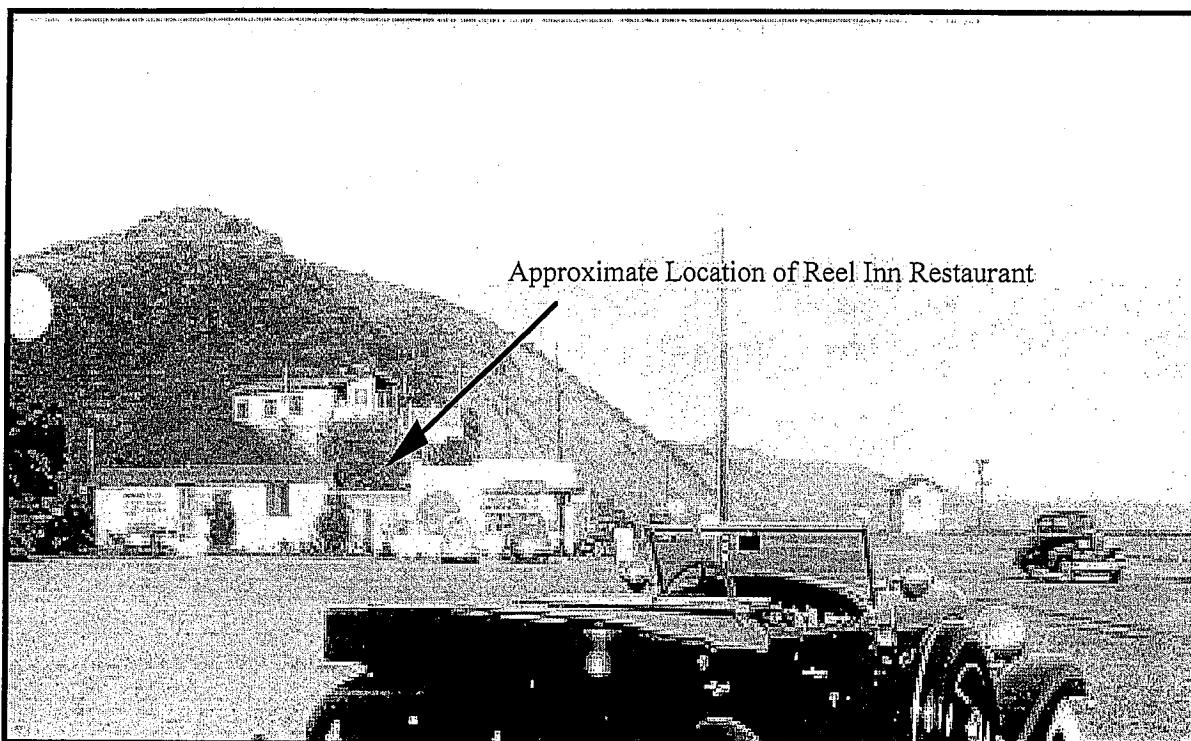
⁸ Lewis and Akin, "Topanga Canyon," 23-24; Leonard and Dale Pitt, *Los Angeles: A to Z*, 313-314 and 505; Mason and Mason, *Appraisal Report*, 22; and Young, *Our First Century*, 157.

⁹ Haynes, *Interview with Author*.

can still be seen in two of the commercial buildings along PCH. However, they have been nearly buried under subsequent remodeling and no longer maintain their historic integrity.¹⁰

Another popular postwar commercial design used on a commercial building along PCH was the so-called Polynesian-influenced *Kon-Tiki* Tropical style. This was reportedly the style used on *The Raft*, a popular roadhouse allegedly frequented by “bad boy” movie actor Lee Marvin. Local informants report that the Raft was housed in a converted residence, east of a gas station (See Photograph No. 12). It was allegedly damaged during a kitchen fire and rebuilt prior to its reopening as the *Reel Inn* in 1985.¹¹

Photograph No. 12. Topanga Beach Auto Court, Looking South along Coast Highway, ca. 1938
(Source: Topanga Historical Society)



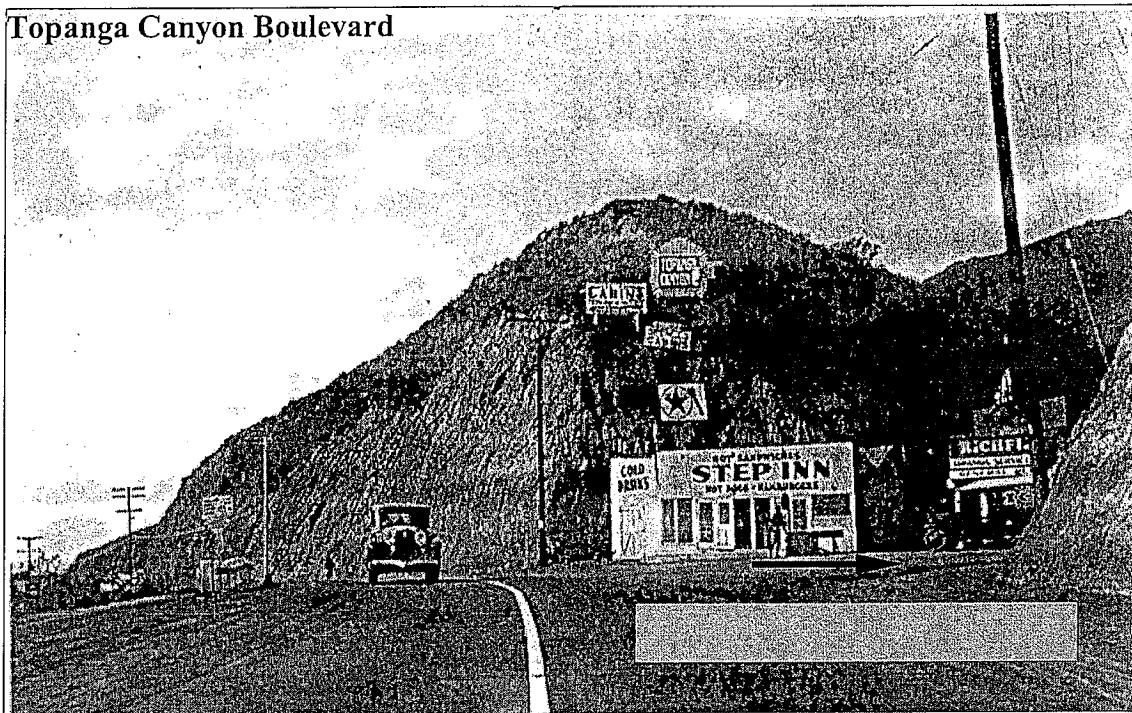
Another significant change in the Lower Topanga Canyon Acquisition area's built environment that occurred during the postwar period was the removal and alteration of several pre-World War II-era buildings on the northwest corner of Topanga Canyon Boulevard and PCH. Currently occupying the site are the *Malibu Feed Bin* and the *Oasis Furniture* sales yard. The former dates back to 1966, and is composed of two earlier commercial buildings, a 1919-era fire station, which later became LAAC's Topanga Canyon Acquisition office, and *Potter's Trading Post*, dating to 1931. At the time of its 1966 takeover, two walls joined the two buildings. The current tenant completed the process by completely enclosing the space between the two buildings. Besides the LAAC office and store, there were other commercial businesses on the site. A 1933 photograph of the intersection (See Photograph No. 13)

¹⁰ Chester H. Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile: American Roadside Architecture* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1995), 39 and 62.

¹¹ Haynes, *Interview with Author*; Andrew Leonard, “Telephone Interview with Author,” 24 January 2002; Banham, *Architecture of Four Ecologies*, 104-106; Rachel Carley, *The Visual Dictionary of American Domestic Architecture* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1994), 239; and Topanga Historical Society-Tegner Photograph Collection, *Topanga Beach Auto Court, Looking South along Coast Highway, ca. 1938*.

shows the Step Inn café and a Richfield gas station and grocery store. In addition to these was a large mechanical ice-making machine that reportedly sold block ice to be placed in the Auto Camp resident's iceboxes.¹

Photograph No. 13. Station "179" Looking North, Road VII-L.A.-60-B, February 1st, 1933, Before Construction of Work Began, (Source: California Division of Highways)



Other changes to the Lower Topanga Canyon Acquisition area occurred during the postwar period. In 1957 LAAC sold off a 80-acre parcel of undeveloped hillside between the intersection of PCH and Topanga Canyon Boulevard to Surfview Drive. Known originally as Sunset Mesa, the parcel was subdivided into the Parker Mesa residential tract. Eight years later, the State of California announced that it was interested in purchasing the entire mile-long stretch of Topanga Beach between Parker Mesa and Topanga Creek, as part of a future state park. After the state purchased the property in 1973, the tenants occupying the houses along the shore were forced to move out under the terms of the sale. The state, which removed the houses soon after, operated the area as Topanga State Beach, until relinquishing operation to Los Angeles County.²

Concurrent with the creation of Topanga State Beach was the state's creation of Topanga State Park north of the study area on July 1, 1973. Originally part of Francisco Sepúlveda's historic San Vicente y Santa Monica Rancho, by the 1980s the park had grown to some 9,000 acres. In August of 2001, the State of California completed negotiations with LAACO to acquire the remainder of their land in Lower Topanga and annex it to the larger Topanga State Park. By doing so, it was able to acquire a

¹ Susan Chasen, "Malibu Feed Bin: Going, Going...", *Topanga Messenger* (May 3-16, 2001), 1-9; Marty Morehart, *Interview with Author*, 30 January 1930, and *Final Report for the Construction of a Primary State Highway from Los Flores Canyon to the Los Angeles City Limits in the County of Los Angeles—STA. 1069+00 SEC. A to STA. 220+00 SEC. B, Contract No. 47VC13, Road VII-L. A.-60-A-B, 4.17 Miles*, 16 December 1933.

² Young, *Our First Century*, 149; and York, *The Topanga Story*, 125.

unique ecological resource, creating an opportunity to extend the park from the mountains to the ocean.³

CONCLUSION

In spite of dating back to California's historic Spanish and Mexican Rancho periods, the Lower Topanga Canyon Acquisition's built landscape dates back to relatively modern times. Constructed roughly between 1925 and 1980, it is concentrated in the lower southwestern section of the acquisition, with scattered sites following Topanga Creek and Topanga Canyon Boulevard a mile or so north of Pacific Coast Highway. Within the built landscape, the Topanga Ranch Motel, the Wood Family Cottage, and Wylie's Bait Shop are representative examples of the area's period of historic growth and development during the area's period of historic significance, 1915 to 1952. Because they have retained their historic integrity, they are potentially eligible for the National Register. Unfortunately the remaining structures and sites have lost their historic integrity either through inappropriate remodeling and/or repairs to both their structure and setting, or by not being old enough to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.⁴ Overall, the Lower Topanga Canyon Acquisition area's built environment is a piecemeal agglomeration of unrelated parts. Because of this, it fails to convey its association with its potential historical significance, thereby reducing their eligibility, as qualified historical resources.

PRELIMINARY INVENTORY AND EVALUATIONS

This section of the report provides preliminary data on the historic resources located within the Lower Topanga Canyon Acquisition study area. It additionally lists those buildings and sites that are considered to be non-historic and therefore non-contributing.

Eligibility Criteria

California State Parks recognizes historic cultural resources based on their eligibility or potential eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and/or the recently established California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR). Historic and architectural significance is determined by applying the criteria of the National Register of Historic Places as defined by the NHRP guidelines outlined in National Park Service (NPS) Bulletin 15. (The CRHR Regulations are based on these criteria.) A resource may qualify for the NHRP if the building or site is 50 years or older and significant within a historic context, meets the eligibility criteria, and retains integrity.

As such, the significance of a historic property can be judged and explained only when it is evaluated within its historic context. Historic contexts are those patterns, themes, or trends in history by which a specific occurrence, property, or site is understood and its meaning made clear." In order to be eligible for the NRHP when evaluated within its historic context, a property must be demonstrated to be significant under one or more of the following criteria:⁵

- A: Associated with an event, or series of events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of history. (Events)

³ York, *The Topanga Story*, 122-125.

⁴ National Park Service, *National Register Bulletin No. 15*, 2 and 41.

⁵ Ibid., 12-21.

- B: Has an unequivocal association with the lives of people significant in the past. (People)
- C: Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.
(Architecture)
- D: Has yielded or may be likely to yield information important to history or prehistory.
(Archaeology)

An additional requirement for the National Register is the retention of integrity or "the ability of a property to convey its significance." Assessment of integrity includes seven criteria which are: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. NRHP and CRHR eligibility is determined by evaluating the above components of context, criteria, and integrity.

LIST OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

Topanga Ranch Motel

Location and Description:
18717 Pacific Coast Highway

Originally named the "Topanga Beach Auto Court," it is a grouping of some 23 detached small wood frame cabins, as well as a barn, storage shed, and a stationary automobile travel trailer arranged in a modified D-shaped plan.

Significance:

The *Topanga Ranch Motel* is potentially significant under Criterion A. It is associated with the development and evolution of automobile-oriented roadside recreational activities in the Lower Topanga Canyon/Southeastern Malibu area during the mid-to-late 1930s and mid-1950s. Its overall design, layout and use of building materials also make it potentially significant under Criterion C. Originally known as the *Topanga Beach Auto Court*, it is a local representation of a locally owned and operated tourist court. Its use of intimate cabins arranged around a courtyard reflected a transitional phase in motel development between the earlier sprawling autocamp to the more formal nationally franchised motor court. Erected sometime after 1933, it sits above the filled-in site of the earlier *Cooper's Autocamp*. A 1920s-era tourist camp, the latter consisted of a number tent cabins, cabins, and cottages originally located north of and below what is now Pacific Coast Highway (PCH) on a slight rise between the Topanga Creek Lagoon and a large conical knoll. The 1933 widening of the Roosevelt Memorial Highway (PCH), and the replacement concrete bridge over the now filled-in lagoon mouth necessitated the camp's relocation. Historic photographs and public records indicate that several of the autocamp's cabins were utilized in the construction of the Topanga Beach Auto Court. During its period of historic significance, ca. 1933-1952, the motel was one of a number of highway-oriented commercial enterprises in the immediate area, which included a market, gas station, and restaurant. It was also convenient to those wishing to stay overnight while recreating at the nearby Topanga Beach. In recent times, Hollywood film and television production companies have frequently used the motel for location work.

Integrity:

Despite certain alterations, the motel has kept its overall integrity of location, design, setting, feeling, and association with the development and evolution of automobile-oriented roadside recreational activities in the Lower Topanga Canyon/Southeastern Malibu area during the mid-to-late 1930s and mid-1950s.

Wood Family Cottage

Location and Description:

3427 Topanga Canyon Blvd

This detached 1 _-story clapboard-sided Cape Cod style residential cottage is located on a level pad slightly below Topanga Canyon Boulevard's western right-of-way. The high pitch roof features projecting eaves covered by fascia boards on the gable end and projecting rafter tails. Other character-defining features include front-gabled roof dormers and an exterior brick chimney. There is also a detached gable-end, clapboard-sided garage associated with the site.

Significance:

The Wood Family Cottage is potentially significant under Criterion A. Beside some of the cabins at the current Topanga Ranch Motel, the Wood Family Cottage is the only other surviving building that is directly associated with the former Topanga Beach Tent City. It is also potentially significant under Criterion C. It is an excellent example of an early 20th century Cape Cod style vacation cottage. Recognized as a unique vernacular American house type for over 200 years, it was a highly popular carpenter/contractor-built home during the 1920s, surviving well into 1960's suburbia. Finally, it is potentially significant under Criteria B, a property moved from its original and/or historically significant location.⁶

Integrity:

Despite the move, which did occur during the building's period of historic significance (ca. 1925-1953), the cottage has maintained, according to *National Register Bulletin 15*, "enough historic features to convey its architectural values and retain integrity of design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association."⁷

Wylie's Bait Shop

Location and Description:

18757 Pacific Coast Highway

This detached 303-sq. ft. wood-frame-construction, rectangular commercial building's vernacular handyman-built appearance appears to have been built using whatever flotsam and jetsam happened to wash ashore at Topanga Beach. Underneath this façade, the building's overall shape, wood siding and shed-roof are typical of the type of functional, vernacular, Modern utilitarian buildings commonly built during the postwar period.

⁶ Van Buren, *House Styles at a Glance*, 14; Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989), 324 and 339; and *National Register Bulletin No. 15*, 29.

⁷ *National Register Bulletin No. 15*, 29.

Significance:

Wylie's Bait Shop is historically significant under Criterion A. Opened in 1947, it is one of the first commercial operations established in the immediate area during the postwar era. It is also one of the oldest continuously owned and operated family-run businesses in the Lower Topanga/Malibu coastline area, which would also make it potentially significant under Criterion B. Its founders, Willis B. and Ruth B. Wylie were well-known local business people who were instrumental in developing and promoting local sports fishing. The Wylies' daughter continues to operate the business, which is highly regarded among the area's sports fishing aficionados.

Integrity:

Reportedly done sometime during the late 1960s or 1970s, alterations include expansion of the front sales area out toward the highway, and wood and tile embellishments. The alterations reflect the Environmental Look, which perceived the woody and earth-toned feeling as being more compatible with the local environment. However, they appear to be reversible, and the building still has enough integrity to make it be eligible for historic designation as an individual local resource.

List of Non-Contributing Buildings and Sites

Commercial Properties		
Address	Name	Condition / Reason
3931 Topanga Canyon Blvd.	Malibu Feed Bin	The current building and adjoining Oasis Furniture sales yard are less than 50 years old, and have experienced substantial alterations.
18661 Pacific Coast Highway	Reel Inn	The building is relatively young, ca. 1985, and does not represent a particularly significant architectural resource, nor is it associated with any major historic trends or noted personage.
18717 Pacific Coast Highway	Topanga Ranch Market	1970-1980-era alterations and remodeling have compromised architectural integrity.
18741 Pacific Coast Highway	Money House	The building is relatively young, ca. 1970s, and does not represent a particularly significant architectural resource, nor is it associated with any major historic trends or noted personage.
18753 Pacific Coast Highway	Something Fishy	
18763 Pacific Coast Highway	Cholada Thai Beach Cuisine	It no longer reflects the simple, yet functional abstract modernism of the post war period due to alterations and remodeling.
18803 Pacific Coast Highway	Ginger Snips	Due to numerous alterations, additions, and remodeling, its present condition no longer reflects the simple, yet functional rustic beach-oriented cottage that it once was.

Residential Properties		
Address	Name	Condition / Reason
3462 Brookside Drive		An addition has reduced the building's level of significance. Also, its level of significance does not warrant its eligibility for separate listing, nor is it eligible for listing as a contributor to a documented district.
Brookside Drive (Address Unknown)	Bougainvillea House	Its level of significance does not warrant its eligibility for separate listing, nor is it eligible for listing as a contributor to a documented district.
Brookside Drive (Address Unknown)	Bee House	Remodeling and additions have reduced the building's level of significance.
Brookside Drive (Address Unknown)	Cable Car Platform East Brookside Drive	Its minimum age and level of significance do not warrant its eligibility for separate listing, nor is it eligible for listing as a contributor to a documented district.
Brookside Drive (Address Unknown)	Cable Car Platform West Brookside Drive	Its minimum age and level of significance do not warrant its eligibility for separate listing, nor is it eligible for listing as a contributor to a documented district.
Brookside Drive (Address Unknown)	Cabin Site 1, Brookside Drive	The site's feature's level of significance does not warrant its eligibility for separate listing, nor is it eligible for listing as a contributor to a documented district.

Brookside Drive (Address Unknown)	Cabin Site2, Brookside Drive	The site's feature's level of significance does not warrant its eligibility for separate listing, nor is it eligible for listing as a contributor to a documented district.
3964 Old Malibu Road		Its level of significance does not warrant its eligibility for separate listing, nor is it eligible for listing as a contributor to a documented district.
3968 Old Malibu Road		Its level of significance does not warrant its eligibility for separate listing, nor is it eligible for listing as a contributor to a documented district.
3974 Old Malibu Road		Its level of significance does not warrant its eligibility for separate listing, nor is it eligible for listing as a contributor to a documented district.
3977 Old Malibu Road		Remodeling and additions have reduced the building's level of significance.
3983 Old Malibu Road		Extensive remodeling and additions have reduced the building's level of significance.
3986 Old Malibu Road		Extensive remodeling and additions have reduced the building's level of significance.
3989 Old Malibu Road		Extensive remodeling and additions have reduced the building's level of significance.
3991 Old Malibu Road		Extensive remodeling and additions have reduced the building's level of significance.
Brick Pavement, Old Malibu Road		Its level of significance does not warrant its eligibility for separate listing, nor is it eligible for listing as a contributor to a documented district.
House Site, Old Malibu Road		Its level of significance does not warrant its eligibility for separate listing, nor is it eligible for listing as a contributor to a documented district.
18805 Pacific Coast Highway		Its level of significance does not warrant its eligibility for separate listing, nor is it eligible for listing as a contributor to a documented district.
18807 Pacific Coast Highway		Its level of significance does not warrant its eligibility for separate listing, nor is it eligible for listing as a contributor to a documented district.
3701 Rodeo Grounds		An addition has reduced the building's level of significance.
3703 Rodeo Grounds		An addition has reduced the building's level of significance.
3707 Rodeo Grounds		An addition has reduced the building's level of significance.
3712 Rodeo Grounds		Additions and remodeling have reduced the building's level of significance.
3715 Rodeo Grounds	Peter Lorrie/Humphrey Bogart Cabin	Corroborating data could not be found to substantiate claim that either Peter Lorrie or Humphrey Bogart occupied this cabin. Additions and remodeling have reduced the building's level of significance.
3715_ Rodeo Grounds		Additions and remodeling have reduced the building's level of significance.
3719 Rodeo Grounds		Room extension and remodeling has reduced the building's level of significance.
3719_ Rodeo Grounds		Additions and remodeling have reduced the building's level of significance.
3720 Rodeo Grounds		The building's estimated date of construction (1960-70) and extensive additions has reduced its level of significance.
3726 Rodeo Grounds		The building's level of significance does not warrant its eligibility for separate listing, nor is it eligible for listing as a contributor to a documented district.
3727 Rodeo Grounds		An addition has reduced the building's level of significance.
3739 Rodeo Grounds		The building's estimated date of construction (1970-80) has reduced its level of significance.
3747 Rodeo Grounds		An addition has reduced the building's level of significance.

3751 Rodeo Grounds		The building's level of significance does not warrant its eligibility for separate listing, nor is it eligible for listing as a contributor to a documented district.
3833 Topanga Canyon Lane		Remodeling and additions have reduced the building's level of significance.
3839 Topanga Canyon Lane		Additions have reduced the building's level of significance, and it may not meet minimum age requirements.
3861 Topanga Canyon Lane		Remodeling and additions have reduced the building's level of significance.
3904 Topanga Canyon Lane		Remodeling has reduced the building's level of significance.
3908 Topanga Canyon Lane		Remodeling has reduced the building's level of significance.
3914 Topanga Canyon Lane		Extensive remodeling and additions have reduced the building's level of significance.
3928 Topanga Canyon Lane		The building's level of significance does not warrant its eligibility for separate listing, nor is it eligible for listing as a contributor to a documented district.
3948 Topanga Canyon Lane		Extensive remodeling and additions have reduced the building's level of significance.
Topanga Canyon Lane (Address Unknown)	Cabin Site with Rock Wall	The site's feature's level of significance does not warrant its eligibility for separate listing, nor is it eligible for listing as a contributor to a documented district.
Topanga Canyon Lane (Address Unknown)	Cabin with Pink Tub in Topanga Canyon Lane	The site's feature's level of significance does not warrant its eligibility for separate listing, nor is it eligible for listing as a contributor to a documented district.
2575 Topanga Canyon Boulevard		Remodeling and additions have reduced the building's level of significance.
2813 Topanga Canyon Boulevard		Built circa 1967, if not earlier. Does not meet minimum age requirements.
2905 Topanga Canyon Boulevard	Cabin Remains	The site's feature's level of significance does not warrant its eligibility for separate listing, nor is it eligible for listing as a contributor to a documented district.
3221 Topanga Canyon Boulevard		Extensive remodeling and additions have reduced the building's level of significance.
3430 Topanga Canyon Boulevard		The building's level of significance does not warrant its eligibility for separate listing, nor is it eligible for listing as a contributor to a documented district.
3431 Topanga Canyon Boulevard		Extensive remodeling and additions have reduced the building's level of significance.
3504 Topanga Canyon Boulevard		Remodeling and additions have reduced the building's level of significance.
3681 Topanga Canyon Boulevard	Electrical Shop	The building is not eligible for placement on the National Register at this time. Additional historical and architectural research is being performed on the property.
3725 Topanga Canyon Boulevard		The building's level of significance does not warrant its eligibility for separate listing, nor is it eligible for listing as a contributor to a documented district.
3731 Topanga Canyon Boulevard		The building's level of significance does not warrant its eligibility for separate listing, nor is it eligible for listing as a contributor to a documented district.
3751 Topanga Canyon Boulevard		The building's level of significance does not warrant its eligibility for separate listing, nor is it eligible for listing as a contributor to a documented district.
3801 Topanga Canyon Boulevard		The building's level of significance does not warrant its eligibility for separate listing, nor is it eligible for listing as a contributor to a documented district.

3813 Topanga Canyon Boulevard		The building's level of significance does not warrant its eligibility for separate listing, nor is it eligible for listing as a contributor to a documented district.
3831 Topanga Canyon Boulevard		The building's level of significance does not warrant its eligibility for separate listing, nor is it eligible for listing as a contributor to a documented district.
3843 Topanga Canyon Boulevard		The building's level of significance does not warrant its eligibility for separate listing, nor is it eligible for listing as a contributor to a documented district.
3851 Topanga Canyon Boulevard		The building's level of significance does not warrant its eligibility for separate listing, nor is it eligible for listing as a contributor to a documented district.
3903 Topanga Canyon Boulevard		The building's level of significance does not warrant its eligibility for separate listing, nor is it eligible for listing as a contributor to a documented district.
3905 Topanga Canyon Boulevard		Additions have reduced the building's level of significance, and it may not meet minimum age requirements.
3921 Topanga Canyon Boulevard		Remodeling and additions have reduced the building's level of significance.

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Topanga Beach Auto Court, Looking East along Coast Highway, ca. 1938.

Topanga Lagoon, Looking at Sunset Mesa in Background, ca. 1929.

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING OF FOUR BORINGS WITHIN A 20th CENTURY BERM AT LOWER TOPANGA CANYON

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April 2005

Michael Sampson, Associate State Archaeologist at Southern Service Center, monitored the excavation of four (4) bore holes by a mechanical drill rig on February 17, 2005. The project location is the newly acquired Lower Topanga Parcel of Topanga State Park in Los Angeles County. The area of testing lay a short distance east, or inland, from the Pacific Ocean and northwest of Topanga Canyon Blvd. The latter test holes were placed in a north-south alignment along a terrace that parallels Topanga Creek; the terrace is reported to have been created by the placement of fill sediments in the latter half of the twentieth century. See attached map for location of the four holes. This berm of fill would have served to protect the adjoining residences (some of which are ramshackle in nature) from flood episodes within Topanga Creek. The drilling was accomplished by a hollow stem mechanical auger mounted on a truck operated by staff from Layne Christenson Company. The drill rig produced an eight-inch diameter hole. A geologist from Geopentech Company of Santa Ana, Rebecca Fusee, gathered the core samples at each test hole for detailed analysis at her company's lab. Rosi Dagit, Resource Conservation District project manager, and Greg Dorame, Native American community representative, were also on-site during the testing.

Two older residents of the adjoining community in Lower Topanga Canyon told Rosi Dagit that the sediments contained within the berm were placed there after a major flood event in 1969. According to other information gathered by Rosi Dagit, additional fill material was placed within the present project area after a flood event in 1980. The 1980 flood material apparently originated from Topanga Canyon Boulevard; a man who served on the clean-up crew in 1980 provided this information to Ms. Dagit.

The four bore holes excavated on 2/17/05 in the presence of Michael Sampson were situated at the two extreme ends of the berm, along with two other holes in between. Such placement permitted the archaeological monitor to view subsurface materials throughout the present project area. The findings from the four bore holes are consistent with the oral history accounts that the existing terrace along Topanga Creek in the Lower Topanga parcel is constructed of fill materials. Observations by the on-site geologist, Rebecca Fusee, and by Michael Sampson reached the conclusion that only fill material is present here. It should be noted, too, that the test borings stopped at depths ranging from 13 feet below present ground surface to 18 feet below ground surface when the holes reached water. No prehistoric or significant historic-period cultural remains were uncovered in the four bore holes.